

# **action pact**

## Head Start

2019-2020 Annual Report

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## AGENCY MISSION

Our mission is big. We strive to create equal opportunity by prioritizing progress over programs.

## OUR PACT

We draw strength from our past and focus our energy on an even stronger future. With action pact's help, our communities will be full of neighbors who can support their families, boost their education, and have a meaningful impact.

Board Chairman:	Leonard Burse
Vice Chairman:	Synita Mathis
Treasurer:	Cathy Benton
Secretary:	Gloria Paulk

Board Members: Rose Bailey, Cathy Benton, Ethelyn Creech, Sam Edgar, Michael Garvin, William George, Walter C. Gibson, ReKasa Hart, Bishop Michael-Angelo James, Kelley Harmon, Bobby Kennedy, Dr. Kim Morgan, Diane Moore, Anthony Simmons, James A. Thomas, Sr., Clarence Washington, and Louise Wilkerson. Ambi Bess: Ex-Officio Member.

### Together we can solve setbacks

America was built on the promise that every family should have an opportunity for success.

**Action pact**, is a Community Action Agency committed to this promise.

## The Head Start Goal Statement

**Action pact's** Head Start/Early Head Start Program will provide quality teaching and learning environments to meet the developmental needs of all children to ensure future educational success. To accomplish this goal, all Head Start Learning Centers will meet or exceed the requirements of the Federal Head Start Program Standards and maintain Quality Rating Standards.

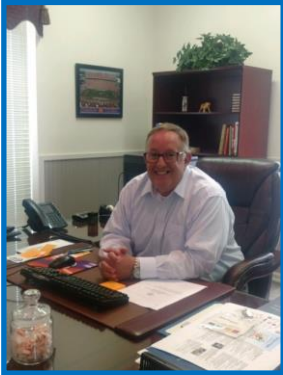
The School Readiness mission of action pact Head Start/Early Head Start is to partner with families and communities to work together to plan, coordinate, and improve services for all children. Head Start/Early Head Start provides all eligible children opportunities to participate in early childhood programs that enable them to enter school with the skills, behaviors, and family support necessary for them to progress and succeed. Action pact also enhances the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services.

*action pact*

**SAY GOODBYE TO JUST GETTING BY.....**



## From the Desk of the Executive Director



**A**ction pact is a community action agency deeply rooted in the promise of improving lives and communities. For over 50 years, we have worked alongside local partners and have become integral to the progress of individuals and families in the communities we serve. With action pact's help, our community will be full of neighbors who can support their families, boost their education, and contribute to their communities. Our Head Start program enables families to build a firm early learning and literacy foundation for their children and partners with the entire family to build capacity for a strong future.

## A Message from the Head Start Director

**A**ction pact's Head Start program continues to thrive. In our third year of our 5-year grant the program now provides 930 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families, with high-quality, comprehensive services which include: education, health, nutrition, mental health, disabilities, family engagement, male involvement, school readiness, and transition. Ensuring the safety and supervision of the children we serve is top priority.

**O**ur highly-qualified teaching staff continues to exceed the standard for professional credentialing, with 100% of Early Head Start Teachers having a minimum of an Infant/Toddler CDA, and 100% of Head Start Teachers having a minimum of an Associate's degree. More than 70% of all staff hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.

**We** welcome our parents, extended families, community leaders, and partners to visit one of our Head Start centers, become a volunteer, and make a difference in the life of a child.



## Head Start Enrollment/Service Area

**Action pact** Head Start operates Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K programs in twelve counties in rural Southeast Georgia, with a total of 17 sites during the 2019-2020 program year. Comprehensive services were provided to 184 Early Head Start infants, toddlers, and/or expectant families. In addition, we served 839 Head Start pre-school (ages 3-4) children and families, of which 120 children (4 year olds) received Georgia state lottery funded Pre-K/Head Start blended services.

<b>County Numbers</b>	<b>EHS Classrooms</b>	<b>EHS Funded Slots</b>	<b>HS Classrooms</b>	<b>HS Funded Slots</b>
Appling	1	8	3	50
Atkinson	3	24	2	34
Bacon	3	24	3	53
Brantley	1	8	2	32
Candler	2	16	2	34
Charlton	1	8	2	34
Clinch	0	0	2	32
Coffee	2	16	4	74
Jeff Davis	0	0	2	36
Pierce	1	8	3	54
Toombs	2	16	1	54
Ware	10	80	14	235
<b>Totals</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>722</b>

### **Program Operation**

The program operates a full year, full day, center-based option in which the children attend the program 6.25 hours per day. Pre-K children attend for an extended stay from 7:45 a.m. - 2:45 p.m. The center calendars are based on the local public school board calendars. The Early Head Start Program also operates a center-based program attends for additional weeks during the summer months. We offered a longer day for Early Head Start this year which will be more helpful for our teen parents and will continue this schedule in the upcoming year. Action pact operates **26** Early Head Start classrooms and **43** Head Start classrooms. There are **17** Head Start/Early Head Start centers in **12** counties and one Head Start administration office located in Waycross.

### **Program Planning**

Each year, the management team, program staff, Policy Council and Governing Board review and update the Head Start program's short and long term goals to ensure that the best quality services are being provided to the children and families we serve. Goals for the 2020-2021 Program Year are as follows:

<b><u>Short Term Goals:</u></b>	<b><u>Long Term Goals:</u></b>
Strive for zero supervision or safety incidents	Strive for zero supervision or safety incidents
Continue to train staff, parents, and community members on creating a "Culture of Safety"	Have a parent meeting room at each center
Add a supervision/safety topic to every staff meeting	Continue to increase partnerships and collaborations within each community served
Maintain Quality Rating at all centers	Increase number of EHS slots to meet demands
Continue to increase family and male engagement to include virtual capabilities	Continue to improve center security as funds allow
Continue to improve tracking of child outcomes	Continue to improve and expand facilities
Continue to increase the use of technology	Update and replace playground equipment as funds allow
Update and replace computers as funds allow	Explore additional service opportunities
Continue practice-based coaching to improve teacher-child interactions, child outcomes, and CLASS scores	Update and replace technology as funds allow
Use ongoing assessment data to plan appropriate early childhood education learning experiences, including LearnERS trainings	Improve center security
Continue attendance training at Parent Orientation to improve child attendance	Continue to hire the most qualified staff and enhance professional development opportunities

Continue to implement new mental health strategies to decrease stress levels	
Continue to work on improving the staff wellness policy	
Continue to update and replace playground equipment as funds allow	
Continue to work on implementation of fidelity of curriculum	
Find additional sources of in-kind	
Continue to train new staff and new centers using the 6 <sup>th</sup> Edition of Creative Curriculum	
Improve center security	
Update and replace technology as funds allow	

### Quality Rated

During the 2019-2020 school year, **action pact's** 17 sites continued the Quality Rated process with several centers completing the re-assessment process. Below are the current levels of our centers. The program is sponsored by the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).

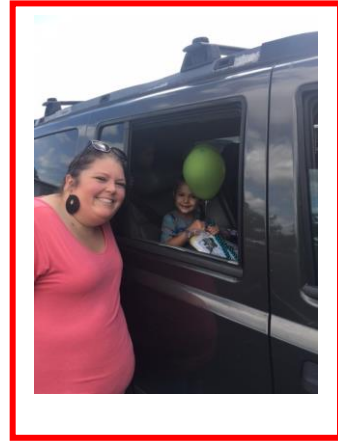
Appling	3 Star – increase from 1 star
Atkinson – Pearson	2 Stars
Atkinson – Willacoochee	3 Stars
Bacon Northside	2 Stars
Bacon Southside	2 Stars
Bacon at ABC	2 Stars
Brantley HS	3 Stars – increase from 2 stars
Brantley EHS	3 Stars
Candler	3 Stars
Charlton	1 Star
Clinch	2 Stars
Coffee	2 Stars
Hazzard EHS	2 Stars
Jeff Davis	3 Stars – increase from 2 stars
Pierce	3 Stars
Toombs	2 Stars
Ware	2 Stars



### COVID-19

The Annual Report would be remiss without noting the effect that COVID-19 had on the program. All of the agency's Head Start programs closed March 16<sup>th</sup> and did not reopen again during the regular program year. Staff quickly went into high gear and went above and beyond connecting with our families, at a minimum of weekly at least. Teaching staff created videos and facebook pages in order to engage with the children including providing read alouds, science and math lessons, just to name a few. Weekly food boxes were provided to any family that requested it for their children. We also provided diapers and wipes as needed. We arranged for drive by pick up or personally delivered supplies to the families. Many of the centers provided a "drive-by" end of year celebration for the children.

Staff worked on required training during this time from home and virtual meetings were held on a regular basis. Leadership team staff also worked from home and continued planning for the current and upcoming year. We await to see how COVID-19 might affect the upcoming year but staff have a number of plans in place for social distancing, sanitation, training, etc., so that we can continue to serve our children and keep our staff healthy during this crisis.



## Summer Program

The program was able to offer a 6-week summer session for children who will be entering kindergarten in several of our counties: Bacon, Brantley, Candler, Charlton, Coffee, Pierce, Toombs, and Ware. Emphasis was placed on kindergarten readiness and those families that took advantage of the program had high praise for the precautions we took and how much the children enjoyed it. There was also a 3-week long program for our Early Head Start children in the same counties. Action pact was able to serve children and their families in eight of our counties during the summer program.

## Staff of the Year

Ms. Anita Young, Parent and Community Engagement Specialist is the 2019-2020 Staff of the Year. Ms. Young goes above and beyond to help parents achieve their goals of becoming better parents and role models for their children. She works tirelessly advocating for our children through parents, other family members and in our communities. Her role in this agency may seem quiet, however, her impact is enormous and her expertise has helped the agency create mutual respect with community members and other agencies at all levels. Additionally, she helps parents see their role as valued members of their community and assists them in gaining the skills and knowledge needed to progress toward their goals for themselves and their children.



Staff noted that they feel very fortunate to have her assistance with parent meetings and other social events for our parents. Her suggestions have proven to be beneficial to the children and families we serve as well as to the overall atmosphere of the centers. Not only a team player, Anita is a genuine person that takes a personal interest in everyone she meets. She gives credit where credit is due, and she knows how valuable this is to the recipient. She believes in others and connects this belief to life having a purpose. She looks for the best in



everyone and truly exemplifies the meaning of human kindness – as well as being loyal, confident, humble, reliable, and passionate. The scope of her abilities is endless, and her work ethic is beyond belief.

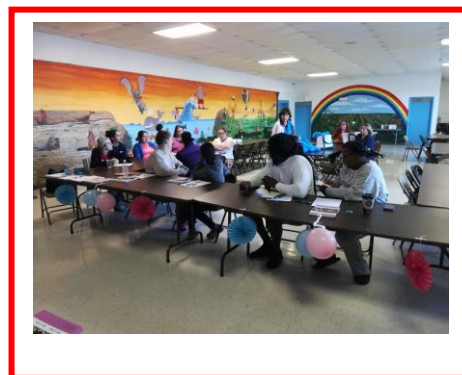
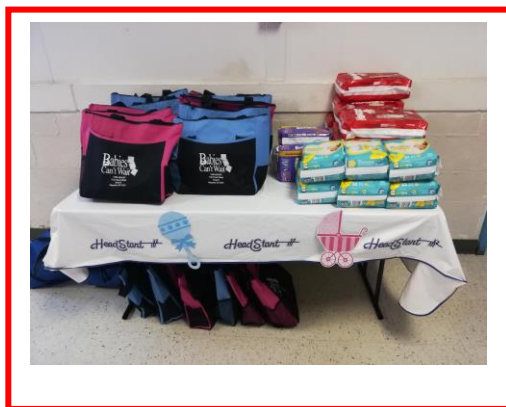
### **Nurturing Parenting Curriculum**

The Performance Standards requires programs to have a parenting curriculum for parents. We use the Nurturing Parenting Curriculum with topics that include, but are not limited to, "Ages & Stages of Growth for Infants & Toddlers", "Communicating with Respect", "Building Self-Worth in Children", "Praising Children & Their Behavior", and "Alternatives to Spanking". The training was made available to all parents in three cluster sessions – one more than last year. The classes were called "Powerful Parents." We were able to provide a book and a literacy activity for each family attending at each class. Parents were very engaged in the classes and many parents formed a bond during the sessions. Next year plans are to have virtual sessions.



### **What To Do When You're Having A Baby**

In November 2019, we held our annual "What to Do When You're Having a Baby" workshop/baby shower for expectant families. The training was held at Ware Co. Head Start and all of our expectant families were invited to attend. All moms-to-be received training and a copy of the health guidebook "What To Do When You're Having a Baby" that gives month-to-month information of the developing baby, when to see a doctor, and what to expect for each month. Moms received information from the local health department on breast feeding and programs such as WIC. Amerigroup discussed all of the available services they have to offer expectant families and new moms. Goody bags were given to each attendee and a wide variety of door prizes were donated by community partners.



## Stars Program

The agency continues to build organizational leadership capacity. The fourth class of STARS (Strategically Training Agency Rising Stars) is currently in session and includes three Head Start staff members, bringing the total Head Start STARS to 15 since the inception of the program. In addition, the agency now has two certified John Maxwell Team trainers, providing agency staff with the opportunity to participate in a number of leadership development trainings.

## UCLA Health Training Grant

For our third year of a 4-year grant from UCLA Health Care Institute, the program held two parent trainings on mental health topics. The two topics were dealing with stress and positive discipline. 75 families were involved in each training. There was also staff training at our pre-service on dealing with children impacted by trauma. We had our Unison Behavioral Health community partner demonstrate some chair yoga exercises for the parents to take part in during the stress training. We went to the classrooms at our Ware Co. Head Start center and practiced yoga poses with the children to help involve the children as well. Other community partners were very helpful by providing door prizes for this event. A number of classroom activities that involved the children and helped to create excitement about the training were held prior to the event. All families in attendance received literature on each topic.

Staff conducting training for the Eat Healthy, Stay Active program of our 4th and final year for the UCLA Health Care Institute grant will attend 3 days of virtual training in August. This year's topic of childhood diabetes and obesity prevention will be conducted somewhat differently than the prior three year's topics. There will be staff training, parent training and follow-up, and a classroom curriculum for children. There will be 10 weeks of daily activities taught in the classroom, 16 weeks of reinforcement activities – 2-3 activities per week, then a graduation. The Eat Healthy, Stay Active program compliments many of our Head Start current efforts in encouraging children and families to eat healthier and be active.



## Budget

**Action pact, Inc.** Head Start receives federal funds to operate the Head Start programs from the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, and Office of Head Start. Additional funding is also received from Georgia Pre-K and CACFP.

The annual budget is developed with input from parents, community members, staff, Policy Council, and the Governing Board. Monthly budget meetings are held throughout the year, and the budget is reviewed at all Policy Council and Governing Board meetings. In addition, Policy Council and Governing Board members receive monthly budget reports during months in which a regular meeting is not scheduled.



<b>Regular Budget</b>			
	<b>Head Start</b>	<b>Early Head Start</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Program Operations</b>	\$7,387,336	\$3,781,628	\$11,168,964
<b>T/TA</b>	\$79,671	\$64,399	\$144,070
<b>Non Federal Share</b>	\$857,727	\$442,992	\$1,300,718
<b>Total</b>	\$8,324,734	\$4,289,019	\$12,613,752

### **Financial Audit**

The annual agency audit was conducted by McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks, & Company. The agency audit report is available at the Administrative Office in Waycross for review.

### **Monitoring and Self-Assessment**

The program self-assessment meeting was held in mid-February 2020. During the first meeting, the Leadership Team reviewed the "Self-Assessment: Your Annual Journey" document sent to grantees from the Office of Head Start. The guide helped the team plan and prepare for the upcoming self-assessment. The Head Start Director asked the team to review data and prioritize areas for self-assessment investigation. Timelines for the self-assessment were established, and the team reviewed data. The team dismissed and reconvened a week later. During the second meeting, the Leadership team established areas to be monitored during the self-assessment, and each Leadership Team member created their self-assessment team. The teams consisted of staff, community members, policy council members, and governing board members. Each Leadership Team member completed Self-Assessment training with their team. Self-assessment was scheduled for March 16th-March 27th, 2020. Considering centers were closed, unexpectedly, on March 16th, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Leadership Team compiled and assessed data remotely. All self-assessment center visits and face to face interviews have been postponed until schools reopen. It is noted that centers were monitored by State licensing and several were monitored by Quality Rated as well.

### **Facilities**

The program was extremely fortunate to make a number of significant improvements to the facilities – both inside and out. In Atkinson County we installed two triangle shades on EHS playground. In Appling County we installed the "Nook" play structure on the EHS playground which is seated on top of a cement slab that is carpeted. Additionally, with the help of a local grant, we installed an 84 foot circular tricycle track. The group that gave us this grant has already committed to another grant and we plan to install a small basketball court on the playground.



At Bacon Northside, all but one pine tree has been removed from this playground. Plans are to install a 18'x18' shade shelter at the beginning of the next school year. In Charlton County we also installed the "Nook" play structure on the EHS playground which is seated on top of a cement slab that is carpeted.

In Clinch County we installed a 5' fence in front of center to help with security, safety and supervision of the children as well a 5' fence in the back area of the building to give the children another large area to run and

play. Coffee County saw the rebuilding of a bridge structure on the EHS playground and we repaired some HS playground equipment and filled in holes.

Hazzard Hill had the "Nook" play structure installed on one of their playgrounds and in Jeff Davis, we removed the old play structure and installed a free-standing slide and a zig-zag balance beam. Triangle shade structure was installed on the Pierce County HS playground and all of the center's floors were stripped and waxed.

The Ware County Center saw a number of improvements including the re-surfacing of the parking lot and made all driving one directional which improved the safety and supervision of the children during drop off and pick up. We installed a door that will give classrooms 1 – 5 direct access to the playground; replaced 141 old florescent lights with LED lights; installed a door into the old library that gives direct access from the foyer. The old library is going to be converted into the counselor and the FA's new office area.

Most all playground structures have been sanded and repainted using the "Flexseal" brand paint.

Future Plans including moving the Family Advocate and Counselor's office to old library area as well as moving the Pre-K classrooms. This will ensure better supervision and flow for the Ware Center. We will be installing new play panels with a shade cover on the HS playground in Pierce County as well as a triangle shade shelter in Jeff Davis. All EHS playgrounds that currently have chips in their fall zone will be replaced with a rubberized fall zone material and we will install washer/dryer combos in centers that do not currently have them.

### **Farm to Early Childhood**

The program continues to embrace the "Farm to ECE" movement and has increased gardening and taste testing activities at the centers. The program continues to partner with the Southeast Health District, and we will be obtaining new raised beds for next year and hope to start utilizing air gardens as well. An added benefit is being able to share the produce with our families.



This year the Ware County Head Start Center was selected to participate in the GA Farm to Early Care and Education Learning Collaborative. The center was awarded a Level 2: Sprouts and will receive \$2,500 in mini-grant funding for a period of 16 months. The grant, which is funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation, will be used to enhance the center's farm to school program. Statewide, 273 early childcare programs applied for the grant, with only 15 being selected to receive funding. "We are grateful to Quality Care for Children, Georgia Organics and Voices for Georgia Children for selecting the center for this initiative," stated Amanda Lankford, Head Start Director. We plan to take our farm to school program to the next level and sharing the information with the children and families it serves. This grant has already allowed for specialized training for the nutrition staff as well as parent engagement opportunities.



## **Parent & Family Engagement**

**A**t action pact, we recognize that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. Parents play an integral part in the program and serve on center parent committees, Policy Council, Health Services Advisory Committee, and the ERSEA Committee. They also assist the program with center activities, program curriculum planning, self-assessment, and volunteer countless hours in the classrooms and at the centers.

**M**onthly parent meetings/trainings were held during the program year. Training was geared toward the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and the seven Family Outcomes areas. Topics included: Becoming a Leader – elections were held for parent officers and Policy Council members, Car Seat Safety, Holiday Crafts, Parenting Tips, Managing Stress, Cooking with Kids, Literacy, GED/Adult Learning Opportunities, Flu Prevention, Math Madness, Service Center Resources, Dealing with Depression, Nurturing Your Child's Social/Emotional Development, Decorating for Talls/Smalls Dance, Challenging Behavior, Financial Management, often provide by financial institutions, Fire Safety, Kid Safety In and Around Cars, Behavior Management and Effective Discipline, Spring into Fitness, Oral Health, Child Safety, Transitioning and Kindergarten Readiness, Domestic Violence Awareness, Health Dept. information, Library Services, Healthy Relationships, Healthy Lifestyles, and Dance Fitness. Monthly newsletters were also available to all parents.

**A**dditional specialized training opportunities, such as "What to do when you're having a baby", CPR classes, IEP (Individual Education Plan) workshops, and "Campers have S'more Fun and Less Stress" and "Staying on Track with Positive Discipline" were offered. Families were also invited to participate in activities such as My Family Day, Math Madness, College Colors Day, Breakfast with Grands, Parent Orientation sessions, Open House, Talls and Smalls Dance, Family Holiday Express, and other monthly family events.

**A** number of special events for fathers and father figures were held. These included: Breakfast with Dads and Egg Hunt, center decorations and repairs, gardening, and two pilot "Grilling with Dads" events. The grilling events were held at Ware and Clinch Counties and were well attended. "Dad's Groups" were encouraged to form at all sites. Some had better response than others. Those involved received special T-Shirts displaying "Head Start CHAMP" where CHAMP stands for "Caring, Honorable, Accountable, Motivated, Protector".

## **Collaborative Partners**

**A**ction pact Head Start has and continues to pride itself on its collaborative partners. Program staff members are involved with all of the Family Connection Agencies and attend their monthly meetings. Civic clubs are supporters of the program and assist with special activities.

**O**ther partnerships include local libraries, health departments, health care groups, Children’s Medical Services, Babies Can’t Wait, UGA Cooperative Extension, local technical colleges, local Police, Sheriff and Fire Departments, EMS services, UNISON Behavioral Center, Georgia Southern University, etc. Many of these partners provide “on-site” field trip experiences at the centers and/or provide parent and staff training.

## **Education**

**T**his is a critical time in our enrollee’s lives to develop patterns that will help our children succeed in school and in life. It is important that action pact Head Start/Early Head Start creates an environment that children can learn through exploration, play, and active involvement with their environment.

**A**ll areas of development (approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, cognition, perceptual, motor, and physical development) are important and interrelated. We have activities that include all areas of development and allow for individual differences in children with special needs and dual language learners.

**W**e keep our parents informed of their child’s development and promote their active participation in our program. We provide ongoing support and education to families to assist them in their role as their child’s first teacher. The following headings highlight ways in which action pact fosters continued growth and individualized instruction.

## **Curriculum**

**A**ction pact Head Start/Early Head Start uses Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos, as well as the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of Creative Curriculum for Preschool. In using Creative Curriculum, teachers are provided with the content and tools needed to encourage and support every type of learner. The studies provided in the curriculum tap into children’s natural curiosity, resulting in a learning environment that is both fun and intentional. The topics of study are flexible allowing teachers to incorporate many of the typical themes that are used in preschools. Using the newest editions also means more knowledge, more resources, and more opportunities for learning which makes these latest editions winners for everyone including staff, enrollees, and families. By the upcoming program year all Head Start classrooms will be using the 6<sup>th</sup> edition.

**C**lassroom files are monitored, and the classroom checked for the fidelity of the curriculum. Monitoring also checks to ensure that the classroom has a relaxed and cheerful environment, intentional teaching is taking place, materials prepared in advanced, and that activities are designed to meet specific objectives for individual children.

**T**he Daily Resources that we identified are instructional tools that feature expanded and detailed guidance for providing intentional, responsive care and teaching during routines and learning experiences for very young children. Routines and experiences are at the center of the framework for the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos. Because of routines and experiences that build each day, and the responsive care and teaching provided during these times, children are enabled to develop a secure attachment with important people in their lives and gain confidences in themselves as learners.

**B**oth curriculums, The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos and the Creative Curriculum for Preschool supply our staff a solid foundation – volumes that provide theory, research, and best practices for providing responsive teachers. The resources provided are both research-based and research-proven.

The supportive curriculum solutions are used by staff, helping them to provide children with developmentally appropriate programs that support active learning and promote progress in all developmental areas. This curriculum has helped us to create a high-learning environment that enables every child to become a creative, confident thinker.

### **Screenings**

All enrollees are required to be screened within 45 days of enrollment. Ages and Stages is the screening tool used for our Early Head Start enrollees younger than 3 years of age and is completed by the parent. The DIAL-4 (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning) is conducted by trained staff and used for Head Start enrollees ages 3 to 5. Early Head Start children who turn 3 years old during the year are additionally screened with the DIAL-4 tool once transitioned into a Head Start classroom.

### **Assessments**

Assessments document and reflect children's growth and learning. This information is in turn, used to intentionally plan instruction. Teaching Strategies *Gold* is the assessment tool used to record and access observations online and allows teaching staff to enter observation data to track each individual child's progress throughout the year. Child assessment reports are shared with parents three times per year following each assessment period. In addition, data is shared with each partnering school system.

### **Relationships with LEA's**

We continue ongoing communication with local schools to exchange information about children as we both share an interest in children's school readiness. At the end of each assessment period, information is shared with partnering school systems so that we mutually work to prepare children for the next phase of their education.

### **School Readiness**

Action pact Head Start collects, analyzes, and aggregates school readiness data during the year to track individual child progress, as well as the program's overall achievement of its school readiness goals. Goals are reviewed and updated annually to strengthen identified areas of weakness. Each site has a School Readiness committee that is selected each year made up of parents, staff, and school system staff which offer input and suggestions in the selection of annual goals. Each child receives individualized instruction based on his/her strengths and needs. The curriculum is evidenced-based and specifically designed to help children develop language and literacy and problem-solving skills, as well as learning how to socialize and interact with others. Children are provided with the opportunity to participate in activities that support math, science, art, drama, language, and culture. Our goal is for our children to leave action pact Head Start prepared for kindergarten, excited about learning, confident in their own abilities and ready to succeed.

Although the school year ended early due to mandatory school closures in the state of Georgia, enrollees in action pact Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms showed growth during the 2019-20 school year. Based on documentation in each of the program designations as represented, children will be better prepared for the next step in their educational process having been a part of our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. As we continue to offer the children of our communities a positive start to their education, we expect the effects to be long lasting.

## Transition

**T**ransition Plans were completed on enrollees entering Head Start and kindergarten. Enrollees' files were transferred to the schools where they would transition. Parental consent was obtained prior to the transfer. Parents were encouraged to continue to prepare their child for the transition throughout the summer months. This can be done by reading books about kindergarten/preschool, visiting the school they will be attending, attending the school's Open House, set up playdates with some of their future classmates, encourage their child to discuss their fears, have the child write a story with their parent about what his or her first day at kindergarten/preschool will be like and ensuring the parent displays a happy, excited mood about the transition so that the child will look forward to the big day. Transition Agreements are signed yearly by the Head Start program and the local Boards of Education and with Babies Can't Wait.

**W**e have well planned transition services for enrollees transitioning to Head Start and for those children transitioning to kindergarten. These services begin at 2 years 6 months for the Early Head Start enrollees as well as offering services to those children transitioning to kindergarten. These services are in place to make the transition into and out of our program easier for our children and families. Our staff and families partner together to share information and plan supportive transition practices. Together they create transition plans that help with each child's adjustment to their new learning environment and make it a positive experience.

Transitioning into Head Start:

- Introduction to the program (how to get answers, daily schedule)
- Inform parents of open-door policy
- How family members can be engaged in their child's learning (volunteering, doing home activities)
- Provide a program calendar (identifies events and parent opportunities)
- Provide Get Ready for Preschool – A starter kit for You and Your Child which included:
  - Helping Your Preschooler Learn (at home activities)
  - Learn about You, Your Child and Preschool
  - Time for Preschool (activities for parents to do with their children)
  - Handout on Families as Advocates and Leaders

**A**ll Head Start enrollees transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten talk about the transition, watch videos, and read books about going to kindergarten. Through the videos, children and families get to see how a typical day unfolds. In one such video "Ready, 'Set,' Go! All Set for School," children and parents even get a view of a kindergarten room.

**F**rom the Children's Perspective on ECLKC (Letting children tell about their own kindergarten experience) is used to get the input from a child about transitioning. For those children transitioning out of Head Start/Early Head Start, our staff provides support through transition in the following ways:

- Promote successful changes in their daily schedule and routines
- Provide positive transition experiences
- Provide staff that help children feel safe and trust adults
- Include parents in the transition process
- Listen to the family's perspective and are responsive to their concerns, worries and questions
- Provide information on kindergarten (Open House, Registration, etc.)
- Provide resources on transitioning
- Create a clear transition plan with families
- Promote independence
- Promote Cooperation
- Provide transition packets



Transition packets, which include the following are normally distributed prior to the closing of school:

- A Resource for Parents – Starting Your Child in School and Your Child’s Education – You Can Make a Difference, which included:
  - Stickers
  - Calendar with activities to use to countdown to the big day
  - A Starting School Activities Book
  - Learn About You, Your Child and School
  - Helping Your Preschooler Learn!
  - Your Child’s Education – You Can Make a Difference

## **CLASS**

**T**he agency’s CLASS Coordinator maintains current reliability in the Infant, Toddler and PreK CLASS tools. Because of the abbreviated school year, 34 Head Start classrooms were monitored during the year using the CLASS PreK tool. CLASS results were separated into three colors indicating the level of support needed. Red indicates the greatest level of support needed, while yellow indicates improvements are being made. Green indicates the staff are successfully carrying out the dimension indicators. Using the most recent National Averages available, scores were determined for each level of support. Overall CLASS averages at the end of the 19-20 school year showed 47% in Green, 24% in Yellow and 25% of dimension scores in Red. The strongest area with the most green scores was Negative Climate, followed closely by Positive Climate and Behavior Management. The most challenging dimension with the least amount of green scores was Concept Development. The agency averages also showed Instructional Support above the National average, while Emotional Support and Classroom Organization averaged just below the National averages.

**B**ased upon review and discussion of CLASS, our program’s areas of strength were identified as:

- CLASS training for all new classroom staff
- T&T/A Consultant input and suggestions
- Extensive “Coach” training
- Individualized coaching
- Coaching successes evidenced in CLASS scores
- Above average Instructional Support scores
- Use of Crosswalk of NCQTL In-Service Suites with the CLASS
- In-house CLASS trainer with 10+ years of experience in the tool

**W**hile we continue to celebrate coaching successes, we also continue to strive to grow the continuous process of improvement. Our system in place for training new staff as they come on board gives staff an overview of CLASS and how it should be evidenced in the classroom. Our professional development includes periodic training and observation opportunities for new staff as they become more familiar with CLASS. For example, new staff receive a half-day training session on CLASS during Orientation to introduce the tool and the Agency’s expectations. In addition, CLASS data was analyzed, and a coaching plan developed for classrooms to begin in the fall. With these systems in place, we expect continued improvement in our CLASS scores and more importantly, improved teacher-child interactions throughout our program.

## **Coaches**

**A**s of August 2017, programs were required to implement a research based, coordinated coaching plan for all education staff. We had four individuals that were employed as coaches. Each of these ladies had a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood or a related field, which is the requirement for this position. Most coaches were trained in Practice Based Coaching and the majority were already CLASS reliable or were scheduled to attend training for their reliability before the early COVID shutdown. All sites have a coach assigned to them which we feel has contributed to the improvement of action pact CLASS scores.

**T**eachers are provided one-on-one coaching and mentoring so that new training lessons are incorporated into daily routines and teaching. Through a consistent, systemic, and guided approach, coaches present feedback in a supportive and non-judgmental manner that engages each teacher. Working together, the coach and the teacher develop an individualized plan which results in enhanced classroom interactions and classroom environments. The coach and the coachee create shared goals and prepare an action plan for achieving them. Focused observations are based on the action plan. The coach provides support of the teacher's growth and development through reflection and feedback. Through this collaborative partnership our teachers are provided support, rapport and trust, choices, ongoing communication, and support successes.

## **Mental Health**

**F**or teachers and parents, it's important to provide social and emotional support to students during these most challenging times because it directly impacts their learning and how they view themselves in and navigate the world. Here at Action Pact Head Start and Early Head Start, we will continue to develop and maintain a culture of caring. Above all, children need to feel empowered and providing them a sense that they belong and are competent to make decisions helps them to feel assured and in control. When children feel confident, they also develop a measure of resiliency that helps them navigate an unprecedented, disruptive time like this. In addition to our ongoing strategies and techniques provided in the classroom to improve behaviors, our counselors will provide our teaching staff and caregivers tips to help children cope with and manage their anxiety around COVID-19.

**A**ction pact Head Start and Early Head Start has one full-time and one part-time contracted Licensed Professional Counselor. Our licensed professional counselors provide services to enrollees, family, and staff. They assist with setting up appointments and providing the needed support for our families. All of our Head Start and Early Head Start sites receive a visit by our counselors once a month. They provide a monthly calendar with the dates and sites that will be visited each day. In the case of an emergency, they make time to visit that center. Although our sites are visited by the counselors, our staff and families can also receive counseling as needed.

**M**ental Health is promoted in all components to ensure the children's overall health and well-being. Our counselors complete the referral process upon the parents' consent with an assessment of the referred child. They collaborate with the teaching staff to provide individualized strategies and techniques to help unmanageable children adapt to the classroom environment. Along with the strategies and techniques in the classrooms, the counselors can provide parents with similar strategies and techniques to ensure consistency in the classroom and home environments.

**I**n regard to the Mental Health aspect of the program, the Second Step curriculum and Conscious Discipline techniques are used to assist with non-violent problem solving. The Second Step curriculum uses role playing and puppets to help the children learn how to socialize with others and manage their own emotions. The Conscious Discipline Program teaches our children how to breathe and describe their feelings to regulate their

own emotions and this includes encouraging a designated safe place area in the classroom when needed. The counselors and mental health/disability specialist also provide our staff with wellness trainings (referred to as DESSERTS, which is STRESSED spelled backwards) throughout the program year. The goal of this training is to teach our staff how to regulate their own emotions while managing their level of stress.

### **Exceptional Children's Week**

**E**ach year Georgia celebrates Exceptional Children's Week which is a time to celebrate the accomplishments of exceptional children. Action pact Head Start takes great pride in celebrating this milestone along with the rest of the state. Centers plan special activities to highlight the work the program does with children who have special needs as well as recognizing teaching teams for the extraordinary work they do.

**D**ana Speed and Kristie Knowlton from Pierce County Head Start were recognized for their extra efforts in educating all children, including exceptional children. Ms. Speed and Ms. Knowlton rely heavily on American Sign language within their classroom to communicate with the children. The teaching team saw the need to help them and their verbal students to communicate with the non-verbal children in the classroom. The teaching team works hard to celebrate the strengths and differences of each child, and their classroom is a happy, productive place.

**M**s. Speed and Ms. Knowlton are team players and help each other by maintaining the routine for all the children in the classroom. "They were nominated by their peers and then selected by leadership," stated Amanda Lankford, Head Start Director. "We are so proud of all of our staff that work with special needs children."

### **Disabilities**

**A**s the invasion of the COVID 19 into our community and state began in March 2020, the families were given educational activities on action pact's Facebook page to continue the developmental advancement of our Early Head Start and Head Start children. Families were given access to the Disabilities Specialist via phone calls and/or emails. The Special News Flash and Mental Health Tidbit newsletters were sent out to families via emails concerning COVID 19 related answers to questions and guidance on how to stay safe and healthy. Our goals at action pact were to continue sharing educational activities for all children and relay information about COVID-19.



**C**hildren with special needs encompassed over 10% of the funded and current enrollment for the 2019-2020 program year. In the area of special needs, the Head Start and Early Head Start programs provided services for 116 Head Start children and 50 Early Head Start children. Some of the services provided to the special need's children included the least restrictive environment and inclusive classrooms. Every classroom, including the inclusion classrooms, included materials that were sensitive to the needs of the disabilities of each individual child. Equipment and learning devices were in place to promote learning and inclusion in the classrooms.

**W**e have a strong relationship with our local Lead Education Agencies such as the Board of Education staff, the Babies Can't Wait program staff and the local private providers such as Speech Language Pathologists. The local Board of Education staff in each of our counties also worked with the Head Start staff in our inclusion classrooms, providing one on one interaction with the children and collaboration with the Head Start teachers. At our Head Start/Early Head Start programs, services available included Speech/Language; Pre-school Intervention; Vision Impairment; Physical Therapy; Hearing Impairment; Mental Health Services; the Special News Flash newsletter and Mental Health Tidbits with the Babies Can't Wait staff working with our children under three years old with special needs. Newsletters for the families served under the local board of education of

each county and the Babies Can't Wait program were sent out to staff for parents in order to provide information on various disabilities and local resources.

Training was accomplished on a one on one basis, with the parents receiving information in the newsletters. Disabilities Specialist met with parents one on one to answer any questions or concerns they had with the services involved in an IEP or IFSP document or the process in doing so. Many of the parents were given resources for support groups and programs to which many joined to find needed services or resources. Training by Parent to Parent of Georgia took place this year. Children diagnosed with special needs for the 2018-2019 school year are noted below. All these children either had a current Individualized Education Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan in place and account for 18.71% of the program's current Enrollment and 18.24% of the program's Funded Enrollment.

Category	Head Start	Early Head Start
Vision Impairment	1	0
Hearing/Deafness	0	1
Deaf/Blind	0	0
Emotional Behavior	0	0
Autism	1	0
Health Impairment	0	4
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0
Learning Disability	2	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	1
Speech/Language	28	7
Developmental Delay	23	23
Intellectual Disabilities	0	0
Non-Categorized – Other	0	0
Multiple Disabilities	61	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>50</b>

### **Federal Review**

The program's triennial review took place in February of 2019. All areas of the Head Start and Early Head Start program were in compliance except for the following findings and deficiency which have been corrected.

From February 11<sup>th</sup>- 15, 2019, the Administration for Children and Families conducted a Focus Area Two monitoring review of **action pact** Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Based on the information gathered during the review, it was found that the program needed improvement in the following two areas; ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement and enrollment. A follow-up monitoring visit was conducted, and the program was found to be compliant, and the findings were corrected.

A second monitoring review was conducted from February 25, 2019. It was determined that action pact had one deficiency regarding child supervision. A follow-up monitoring visit was conducted, and the program was found to be compliant, and the deficiency was corrected.

The program also received a CLASS monitoring review. The program's CLASS scores improved in each dimension from our 2014 federal review. We do not know how our scores will compare to the 2019 national CLASS scores, as this report has not been released at this time.

## **Emergent & Family Literacy**

**E**mergent and Family Literacy was and continues to be a priority at Head Start. Programs and special events such as the Pajama (P.J.) Reading Party, National Play Doh Day, Read Across America, Family Reading Night, Read to a Child Program, Library Card Sign-Up Month, JumpStart Read for the Record, Georgia Read Aloud Day, and others were held. Special parent literacy workshops are offered. These programs and events help to reinforce the need to read aloud to children, increase children's vocabulary and family literacy. The Parent:Child home activities also have a focus on family literacy, and the program incorporates additional parent/child literacy activities into our special events.

**F**amily Reading Night continue to draw large crowds and children and their families have the opportunity to read together and participate in several hands-on activities. Seeing families participate together, many times bringing the entire family along, has been an extra benefit. This year we highlighted the book, "Maisy Goes Camping."

**T**he program received a Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) matching grant and has already been approved for one for the upcoming program year as well. Book distributions are held whereby children are allowed to pick out a book which they can use to start or add to their home library. Special motivational activities are held and action pact was honored to be featured on the national RIF website.

**P**arents are encouraged to complete their high school education, and family advocate staff refer families to their local adult education centers. We began an ESL (English as a Second Language) class at our largest center for Spanish speaking families. The class is taught by one of our own Family Advocate staff. As an added benefit, the participants have also become more active at the center attending the various other events and workshops.

## **Professional Development**

**A**ction pact Head Start continues to be very proactive in the area of staff development and training. The program has a DECAL (Department of Early Care and Learning) approved trainer, one CLASS certified trainer (Pre-School and Toddler); two American Heart Association CPR and First Aid trainers; two certified Family Development Credential trainers; one nationally certified playground inspector; and one Darkness to Light instructor. Pre-service and in-service trainings are approved for state approved hours, and staff received trainings throughout the year. This past year due to the COVID shut-down staff were able to complete their required trainings on-line. We already are making plans for virtual trainings for the upcoming program year as well. The program's Training Specialist has presented training at state and regional conferences as well as to other Head Start and child-care programs. We have continued to work on our on-boarding process and now include a "Boot Camp" aspect to orientation which goes more in-depth into each component.

**S**taff members are able to take advantage of DECAL incentives and scholarship funds which were available to assist them in attending college and advancing their professional development. Changes to the incentive/scholarship program have included the eligibility of all Head Start Centers as well as the *Awards for Early Educators Program*, which is a limited time program intended to encourage individuals who pursue higher credentials and degrees. The program will award a single bonus at each level to eligible applicants who earn a CDA, TCC, ECE Diploma, AA, BA or MA degree. A number of staff have been able to take advantage of this program. In addition, DECAL has also increased the number of payments to eligible staff. This past year approximately \$37,000 was paid out to staff members from the DECAL Scholars Program.

**We** were approached by the Branaugh Group regarding participating in on-line training for a program entitled, "LearnERS." In January 2020 we conducted training with staff and in February we rolled out the on-line training modules. We are part of a national pilot program for training that specifically is geared to the ECERS and ITERS ratings. Our DECAL trainer has been able to have many of the modules state approved and with the closing for COVID this training has been an integral part of ensuring that staff received their required training hours. Coaches have been able to participate in specialized virtual meetings and staff have noted how much they have enjoyed this training and beneficial it has been, especially for new staff.

**All action pact** Head Start teachers have an AA degree or higher and meet the Federal mandate or have a waiver and are on track to receive their AA degree. Additionally, over 50% of Head Start teachers have a BA degree or higher, exceeding the 50% requirement. Statistics of interest for the 2019-2020 program year (from August, 2019 - July, 2020):

- ❖ Over **2,020** hours of college .
- ❖ Over **10,000** hours of total training, an increase of over 4,000 hours the previous year.
- ❖ Over **4,000** hours DECAL approved training, an increase of over 1,000 hours.
- ❖ Over 2,100 hours of Professional training hours
- ❖ All Early Head Start teachers have a minimum CDA in infant/toddler or higher credential.

### **Health Services Advisory Committee**

The Head Start program has a very active Health Services Advisory Committee that meets three times a year: February, May, and September. Members have included: an audiologist, a first responder, representatives from our local Health Department and Southeast Health District, Babies Can't Wait, Children's Medical Services, Children First, Family Connection directors, CMO representatives, and representatives from other community agencies or related businesses. Parents and family members are also encouraged to attend the meetings. There is a brief training at the meetings on a health topic, then program staff discuss successes and challenges that they are working on concerning the health, nutrition, disabilities, and mental health components. Advice from the HSAC is often requested from staff to help with different matters. Community updates and parent comments/questions are also part of each meeting. Topics discussed at the HSAC meetings have included: Culture of Safety, Emergency Preparedness; Heart Attack Symptoms/Prevention; Cancer Awareness; Vehicle Safety for Children; Flu Prevention, Farm to ECE, as well as other timely topics.

### **Policy Council**

**Head Start** grantees must ensure they have an established Policy Council and a well-functioning governing body which shares the responsibility for the oversight of the program while following the Performance Standards. Program governance in Head Start is a shared responsibility. Board members and Policy Council members are critical to the success of our program.



The Policy Council also shares responsibility with the management team to ensure there are effective systems, policies and procedures that strengthen the quality of the program. Their role helps the management team deliver high quality services to the children and families.

The Policy Council is responsible for reviewing and approving the Head Start budget, personnel hiring/terminations, grant applications, procedure changes, monthly financial statements and credit card expenditures, and other important items. Parent Policy Council members serve as a link between parents and the Parent Committee. By reporting back to their center's Parent Committee, they help the parents they represent better understand the role and functioning of the Policy Council and keep them updated on what's going on within the program.

Currently, action pact's Head Start Policy Council is made up of twenty-one members: fourteen parent representatives and seven community representatives. There is a Head Start parent representative and alternate from each of our twelve-county service area. There are additionally two at-large Early Head Start parents, one from Appling Co. EHS and one from Hazzard Hill EHS, Ware Co.

The seven at-large community members represent the following counties: Appling – Public Health Nurse from the Appling County Health Department; Bacon – retired educator; Brantley – Family Connection Executive Assistant; Charlton – Director of Emergency Management, Coffee – retired Educator, Jeff Davis – Special Education Director; and Ware – Health Promotion Coordinator for Southeast Health District. Members may serve up to a maximum of five years on the Policy Council.

### **State Licensing**

While Head Start is technically exempt from State Licensing in Georgia action pact has opted to license all eligible centers. We are proud that this past year we licensed the remaining centers that were not DECAL licensed. As of July 2020 all 17 centers are now DECAL licensed.

### **Young Athletes**

Action pact, along with several community partners have assisted in launching a pilot study, Young Athlete's, in conjunction with the Special Olympics organization. The study, being conducted with children from the Ware County Head Start Center, will help in implementing an inclusive physical program for children ages two to seven years old.

When asked to join action pact Head Start program in accomplishing this feat, two medical entities stepped up to the plate; Henderson Family Practice with Lori Henderson at the helm and McKinney Health Center with Charles W. "Billy" Klein, Physician Assistant, and his team. Both medical practices were very patient and have been great with the children and assisting participants in getting physicals completed.

The pilot study started with three Pre-K/Head Start classrooms in September and have been using the curriculum, equipment and activities associated with the Special Olympics' Young Athlete program. The pilot study began in September 2019 concluded in December 2019. Results showed great promise in keeping our children physically fit with an inclusive environment for all children. The Head Start program was given monetary incentives for completing the pilot program and getting all the physical completed by volunteer doctors in the community and was the first platform to use the Young Athlete's Program in the South Georgia region. Action pact Head Start embraces inclusion and is excited to be one of the first in South Georgia to participate in this study.



## **Nutrition**

**N**utrition is an integral part of the Head Start program. Children receive a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack while in our care. As part of our SNAP-Ed and Georgia Farm to School grants are working to incorporate more fresh fruits and vegetables into the menus. Additionally, we have tried new foods for snack time. These have included hummus, black bean chips and sun butter (a natural alternative to peanut butter). The children have enjoyed trying the new foods.

