

action pact

Head Start

2020-2021 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, Memie Boney, Ethelyn Creech, Sam Edgar, Michael Garvin, William George, Walter C. Gibson, Bishop Michael-Angelo James, Bobby Kennedy, Lee Lewis, Linda McDuffie, Dr. Kim Morgan, Anthony Simmons, Tina Smith, James A. Thomas, Sr. and Clarence Washington. Tiffany Lanning: 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 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

Action 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

Action pact's Head Start program continues to thrive. In our first year of our 5-year grant the program now provides 900 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.

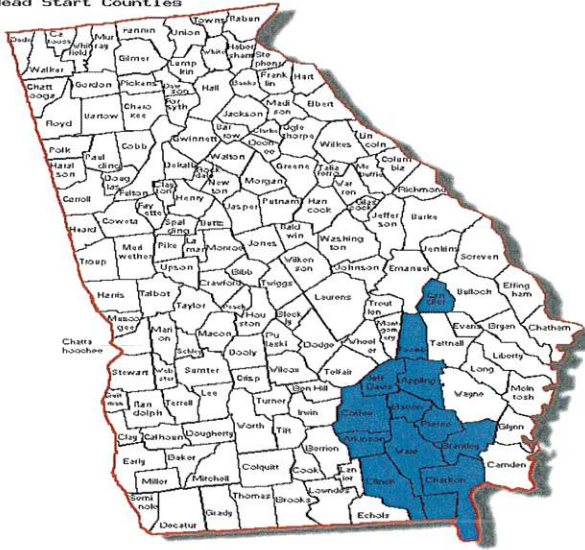
Our highly qualified teaching staff continues to exceed the standard for professional credentialing, with 100% of Early Head Start Teachers having a minimum of an Infant/Toddler CDA, and 100% of Head Start Teachers having a minimum of an associate degree. More than 70% of all staff hold a bachelor's 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

Head Start Counties



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 2020-2021 program year. Comprehensive services were provided to 208 Early Head Start infants, toddlers, and pregnant women. In addition, we served 642 Head Start pre-school (ages 3-4) children and families, of which 80 children (4 year olds) received Georgia state lottery funded Pre-K/Head Start blended services.

County Numbers	EHS Classrooms	EHS Funded Slots	HS Classrooms	HS Funded Slots
Appling	1	8	3	51
Atkinson	3	24	2	34
Bacon	3	24	3	50
Brantley	1	8	2	32
Candler	2	16	2	34
Charlton	1	8	2	34
Clinch	0	0	2	34
Coffee	2	16	4	71
Jeff Davis	0	0	2	34
Pierce	1	8	3	51
Toombs	2	16	3	51
Ware	10	80	14	246
Totals	26	208	42	722

Program Operation

Action pact Head Start offers the full-day, center-based option. Early Head Start children are offered a 7.50-hour day, and Head Start children are offered a 6.25-hour day. Head Start children are served during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 2:15 p.m. Monday through Friday, with children in our blended Pre-K classrooms receiving services from 7:45 a.m. until 2:45 p.m. each day. Children in Early Head Start are served during the hours of 7:45 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. Families with children in more than one program are accommodated with individualized drop off/pick up times. The center calendars closely follow the local public school calendars. Early Head Start children are served for at least 1,380 per year, Head Start children 1,020 hours per year, and Pre-K 1,170 hours per year. Action pact operates 26 Early Head Start classrooms and 42 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:

<u>Short Term Goals:</u>	<u>Long Term Goals:</u>
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
Continue practice-based coaching to improve teacher-child interactions, child outcomes, and CLASS scores	Explore additional service opportunities
Use ongoing assessment data to plan appropriate early childhood education learning experiences, including LearnERS trainings	Update and replace technology as funds allow
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 th Edition of Creative Curriculum	
Improve center security	

Quality Rated

During the 2020-2021 school year, **action pact's** 17 sites continued the Quality Rated process with several centers starting 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
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
Brantley EHS	3 Stars
Candler	3 Stars
Charlton	1 Star
Clinch	2 Stars
Coffee	2 Stars
Hazzard EHS	2 Stars
Jeff Davis	3 Stars
Pierce	3 Stars
Toombs	2 Stars
Ware	2 Stars

COVID-19

The program was able to remain open and continue in-person, full day services to children in Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K children during the pandemic. Unlike

previous school years, in which parents walked their children to the classrooms, all centers began using a drive through drop off and pick up system for daily arrival and departure of students. Head Start staff wore Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and checked the temperature of each child before allowing them into the center. In addition, COVID symptom questions were asked to ensure children were symptom free before accepting them into the center.

Due to COVID-19, groups of children from each classroom did not mix on playgrounds or other areas throughout the center. Due to state licensing rules, parents and volunteers were not allowed in the centers, which created a challenge for family engagement and accruing the required non-federal share. The program followed all local Health Department recommendations regarding any classroom closures that were required due to a positive case. All positive COVID cases were submitted to the Department of Public Health. Sanitation and social distancing were kept in the forefront of decision making. If any classroom had to close or quarantine for any length of time, meals were provided for the children, as well as diapers and wipes. Families were given access to the Google classroom lessons and home learning packets. Teachers also used Ready Rosie to connect with families during child quarantines. Ready Rosie offered parents guided activities for the children that aligned with the lessons being taught at Head Start.

The agency was and is extremely proactive regarding COVID vaccines. Staff were given incentives, such as a day off with pay, once they provided proof of being fully vaccinated. The program has followed all Federal and State guidelines regarding COVID and will continue to do as we plan for the future for Head Start and Early Head Start. The number of positive COVID results for children in our care since January of 2021 is 14, which amounts to 1.5% of our total enrollment.

Health

Finding medical and dental homes for children became more of a challenge as providers began to reduce taking new patients and reducing some of the services that were previously provided. Action pact was able to address vision screening challenges by partnering with Prevention Blindness Georgia. All of our family advocate staff have participated in training and are certified vision screeners. We are now able to screen the children that do not have insurance or a provider.

Staff of the Year

Instead of selecting one Staff of the Year for the 2020-2021 program year, the agency selected one staff for each position to be recognized.

Congratulations to all the individuals who were selected for Staff of the year.

Overall Staff of the Year	Kristy Knowlton
Center Coordinator	Shasta Allen

Teacher	Victoria West
Teacher Assistant	Heather Rowland
Floater	Anahi Chaga
Interventionist	Mary Harrison
Custodian	Daniel Cox
Coach	Alaycia Staten
Family Advocate	Crystal Hodge
Cook	Willis Beacham
Food Transporter	Shemika Rogers
Specialist	Tammy Perritt

STARS Program

Action pact is committed to employee growth and development. STARS (Strategically Training Agency Rising Stars) is in its fourth year of operation. To date, 14 Head Start staff members have successfully completed the program, with 8 of those taking on roles with increased responsibility following completion. Action pact believes that leadership skills are essential for all staff, regardless of position.

Budget

Action pact Head Start receives federal funds to operate the Head Start and Early 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.

Below is the budget for November 1, 2019-June 30th, 2021

Program Type	Funded Enrollment	Federal			Non-Federal Share	Non-Federal Percentage	Total Budget
		Program Operations	TTA	Total			
Head Start	722	\$6,782,173	\$79,671	\$6,861,844	\$1,715,459	20%	\$8,577,303
Early Head	208	\$3,479,500	\$64,399	\$3,543,899	\$885,983	20%	\$4,429,882

Program Type	Funded Enrollment	Federal			Non-Federal Share	Non-Federal Percentage	Total Budget
		Program Operations	TTA	Total			
Start							
Total	930	\$10,261,673	\$144,070	\$10,405,743	\$2,601,442	20%	\$13,007,185

The agency received a supplemental grant for COLA and Quality Improvement for the budget period of November 1, 2019-June 30th, 2021. The 2% COLA increase for all Early Head Start/Head Start staff helped our program in our continued quest to bring staff salaries and fringe benefits more in line with local competitors, and therefore, assisted us in recruiting and retaining the most highly qualified and capable staff. The 2% COLA funds were retroactive to the beginning of the Fiscal Year, which was November 1, 2019. The use for the remaining balance of the COLA funds was for an additional increase of 2.5% which totals a 4.5% increase, for all Family Advocates.

Program Type	Federal			Non-Federal Share	Non-Federal Percentage	Total Budget
	Program Operations	TTA	Total			
Head Start	\$403,823	\$0	\$403,823	\$0	0%	\$403,823
Early Head Start	\$69,590	\$0	\$69,590	\$0	0%	\$69,590
Total	\$473,413	\$0	\$473,413	\$0	0%	\$473,413

Action pact Head Start received a one-time supplement for \$90,000 to purchase three new compact sports utility vehicles to be used for travel between Head Start centers for monitoring, providing support, attending trainings, and to assist children, families, and staff in our service area.

Below is the budget for one-time supplemental grant:

Program	Federal	Non-	Non-	Total
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Type	Program Operations	TTA	Total	Federal Share	Federal Percentage	Budget
Head Start	\$55,800	\$0	\$55,800	\$13,950	20%	\$69,750
Early Head Start	\$34,200	\$0	\$34,200	\$8,550	20%	\$42,750
Total	\$90,000	\$0	\$90,000	\$22,500	20%	\$112,500

The Head Start program received Supplemental Summer Program funds that were used to implement a 6-week summer program in Bacon, Brantley, Candler, Charlton, Coffee, Pierce, Toombs, and Ware counties. The program served 84 currently enrolled four-year-old children, including children with Individual Education Plans, which are transitioning to kindergarten during the 2020-2021 school year. The summer program provided social and emotionally supportive learning environments and daily routines, as well as academic skills to support each child's transition to kindergarten. The program operated from June 15, 2020, through July 24, 2020.

Below is the budget for the Supplemental Summer Program:

Program Type	Funded Enrollment	Federal			Non-Federal Share	Non-Federal Percentage	Total Budget
		Program Operations	TTA	Total			
Head Start	84	\$142,710	\$0	\$142,710	\$0	0%	\$142,710

The program also received a one-time supplement for actions or activities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Below is the budget for the supplemental funds:

Grant Program, Function or Activity		New or Revised Budget		Total
		Federal	Non-Federal	
1.	Head Start: Program Operations	\$549,363	\$0	\$549,363
2.	Early Head Start:	\$267,928	\$0	\$267,928

Grant Program, Function or Activity		New or Revised Budget		Total
		Federal	Non-Federal	
	Program Operations			
5.	Totals	\$817,291	\$0	\$817,291

The Head Start program also received a 1.22% COLA increase for all Early Head Start/Head Start staff. The 1.22% COLA was a permanent increase to the Early Head Start and Head Start pay scale. The remaining balance of the COLA funds were used to increase the Center Coordinator and Coach workdays to coincide with the extended Early Head Start schedule. Center Coordinator hours increased from 1,688 hours annually to 1,760 hours annually. The Coaches also moved to the Early Head Start schedule, which increased their annual hours worked 1575 hours to 1728 hours. Below is the budget for the funding:

Grant Program, Function or Activity		New or Revised Budget		Total
		Federal	Non-Federal	
1.	Head Start: Program Operations	\$57,827	\$0	\$57,827
2.	Early Head Start: Program Operations	\$29,485	\$0	\$29,485
5.	Totals	\$87,312	\$0	\$87,312

The Head Start program received one-time funding for activities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. The funds were received in 2021 and can be used through June of 2023. The total funding amount is shown in the below chart:

Grant Program, Function or Activity		New or Revised Budget		Total
		Federal	Non-Federal	
1.	Operations: Operations	\$279,901	\$0	\$279,901

Grant Program, Function or Activity		New or Revised Budget		Total
		Federal	Non-Federal	
5.	Totals	\$279,901	\$0	\$279,901

Additional one-time funding to carry out activities related to COVID was received in 2021 and will be used through June of 2023. Below is the budget:

Grant Program, Function or Activity		New or Revised Budget		Total
		Federal	Non-Federal	
1.	Operations: Operations	\$1,165,673	\$0	\$1,165,673
5.	Totals	\$1,165,673	\$0	\$1,165,673

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. The agency received an unqualified audit report.

Self-Assessment

The annual Self-Assessment Meeting was held March 4, 2021. During the meeting, it was decided that each component would be reviewed. Timelines for the self-assessment were established, and the team discussed which area(s) in each component needed to be reviewed. In view of COVID guidelines, and volunteers and parents not being allowed in the centers due to State licensing regulations, the teams consisted of staff members only. The self-assessment summary has been reviewed extensively with the Policy Council and the Governing Board for their information and input.

Due to COVID-19 some data was reviewed remotely, such as through reports from ChildPlus, and classroom monitoring was done via camera links. Team members were able to interview staff members face-to-face this year while keeping in mind all safety protocols. Child safety and supervision is monitored on a monthly basis to ensure a safety and supervision strategies are being followed. All centers were monitored twice during the year by State licensing as well as leadership team members on a routine basis.

Facilities

The program was extremely fortunate to make a number of significant improvements to the facilities – both inside and out. Work was started to upgrade all camera systems in all centers as well as upgrading and unifying the intercom/phone systems. Walkway covers installed at the loading/unloading areas were completed in several centers. All but one playground now has a rubberized poured in-place surface material. A number of centers had repainting done. In Appling, a basketball court with equipment was built on the Head Start playground. At Bacon Northside, a bathroom door entrance was added to the classroom for better supervision and security.



The Candler County Service/Senior Citizen center programs moved into our existing Candler County Head Start center. A double set of doors in the hallway were installed to divide the Senior Center and the Head Start program. Head Start offices were moved to the Head Start wing. The Early Head Start playground was expanded. A Head Start classroom was converted to an Early Head Start classroom. In Charlton County, an Early Head Start classroom was added and a wall was built in the administrative area to house custodial and food service equipment and materials due to the addition of another classroom. A tricycle track for the Head Start playground was installed. In Clinch a Head Start classroom was converted to an Early Head Start classroom.

At Hazzard Hill, the Early Head Start playground was divided with a fence to accommodate a Head Start play area. This site now has three separate play areas. At our largest center, Ware, emergency exit doors for the Pre-K rooms have been installed. Sinks have been installed in the Pre-K rooms. A large storage closet was added to the Pre-K wing. The Family Advocate wing, walkway, office, and front lobby roof was replaced.

POWER Payments

In February 2021, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and Commissioner Amy M. Jacobs announced plans for \$1,000 supplemental payments, known as POWER, to all eligible early learning professionals and staff in Georgia. The payments were used to recognize the dedication and hard work shown during the COVID-19 pandemic. POWER is funded through federal COVID relief funds. The majority of our staff, including custodians, nutrition, education, clerical and family advocate staff were able to participate in the program. It was a huge morale booster for staff to receive these funds.

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 obtained new raised beds and started utilizing air gardens as well. The Ware County Head Start Center completed the GA Farm to Early Care and Education Learning Collaborative grant. The grant, which was funded by the WK Kellogg Foundation, was used to enhance the center’s farm to school program. Our program was also selected to participate in the National CACFP conference as we conducted a taste testing activity in one of our Pre-K classrooms, live in front of hundreds of participants.

Centers have been participating in more than just gardening. They have increased the number of taste testing activities as well as embracing the Harvest of the Month.

We were honored to be asked to partner with Georgia Organics in applying for a DECAL (Department of Early Care and Learning) Community Transformation Grant for Ware County. They were successful in being only one of eight organizations out of 34 who were approved for this new grant. Georgia Organics will co-design the Family Farm Share Program with a group of Ware County community partners (Ware Children’s Initiative and WayGreen) to nourish working families and intertwine programming to meet a community need for a low-cost, high-quality access point to fresh local food. Grant funds will be used to reduce food insecurity for children ages birth to 5 and their families. The initiative is a sliding-scale, low-cost vegetable box program specifically designed for families of young children at childcare and Head Start programs. It will democratize access to organic and healthy food, while educating families about how to prepare and enjoy their weekly bounty from farmers in their communities. We are excited at the prospect of this partnership which will be a pilot program for the state.



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”. Due to parents not being able to come to in-person trainings due to COVID-19, the training was made available to all parents in recordings of five lessons. We were able to provide a book to

families for each of the videos they watched. Although we prefer the in-person method, we were glad that we could still provide this valuable information to our parents during the pandemic

What To Do When You're Having a Baby

In place of our annual “What to Do When You're Having a Baby” workshop/baby shower for expectant families this year, we provided the guidebook with the same title and a goody bag of baby items and items for the expectant moms. Families were not able to come into the centers due to the pandemic, so we searched for an alternative to the in-person training. We were able to work with our Family Advocates to find out how many expectant families were in the program, and they helped us deliver the materials to the family. Goody bags items were donated by community partners.

UCLA Health Training Grant

For our fourth and final year of our grant from UCLA Health Care Institute, the program held two virtual parent trainings “Eat Healthy, Stay Active”. This year's topic covered childhood diabetes and obesity prevention by helping families learn about healthy nutrition, staying active, and shopping on a budget. Families that participated in both trainings were provided a crockpot, plus there were several door prizes at each training. In addition to the parent training of “Eat Healthy, Stay Active”, there was a classroom component. Four classrooms volunteered to use the curriculum with their children and were provided with materials to use with the children. There were games and music that helped the children learn about healthy eating and being physically active. Food tasting activities were also incorporated. With funds from the grant, we were able to provide several items for the classrooms to check out while doing cooking for the taste testing activities. Teachers shared how much their children loved the activities.

Adopt a Cow Program

A number of the centers embarked on a fun project this past year. Each of the classrooms have virtually “adopted” a cow through the Adopt a Cow program with Discovery Dairy.

The program pairs a classroom with a farmer and a calf that they interact with all year long. Students learned the calf's name, her birthday, where she lives, how and what she eats, her growth progress and how the farmer takes care of her. They will even have a virtual “field trip.” Centers reported how much fun children had learning about their cow as they received regular updates. Some even created a hands-on experience for “milking.”



Family Services

The 2020-2021 school year marked the first year the agency conducted virtual enrollment applications due to the pandemic. The agency used an online system for parents to sign applications electronically. This past school year the program's average enrollment in most counties was lower than normal due to concerns with COVID-19 and staff shortage. It also influenced turnover in all our counties. Many families who had a sick child would decide not to bring them back to school. With families not being able to come in the centers due to COVID-19, family advocates were involved in pickup and drop off times to help building relationships and partnerships with the families. Although the pandemic caused many challenges, there was an increase in family partnerships.

Parent & Family Engagement

At 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. Due to the pandemic, however, this year parents were unable to come into the centers to volunteer or for parent activities. Parent meetings/trainings were held virtually 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, Adult Learning Opportunities, Parenting Tips, Managing Stress, Literacy, Service Center Resources, Challenging Behavior, Budgeting, Building Credit and Home Ownership, Child Abuse Prevention, Health Insurance Provider Services, Fire Safety, Child Safety, Transitioning and Kindergarten Readiness, Health Dept. information, Healthy Relationships, and Healthy Lifestyles. Monthly newsletters were also available to all parents. Additional specialized training opportunities, such as "What to do when you're having a baby" guidebooks for expectant families were provided, IEP (Individual Education Plan) workshops, and "Eat Healthy, Stay Active" were offered.

Health Services Advisory Committee

The Head Start program has an 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. Due to the pandemic, virtual meetings were held this year.

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 slot for each of our twelve-county service area. There are additionally two at-large Early Head Start slots available. The seven at-large community members represent the following counties: Appling – a bank officer from the city of Baxley; Bacon – Director of ABC Child Development Center; Brantley – Family Connection Executive Assistant; Charlton – Director of Emergency Management, Coffee – retired Educator, Jeff Davis – Special Education Director; and Ware – Librarian. Members may serve up to a maximum of five years on the Policy Council.

Education

This 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.

All 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. We 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.

Curriculum

Action pact Head Start/Early Head Start uses Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos, as well as the 6th 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. The children guide the direction of the studies and the length of the study. Using the newest editions also means more knowledge, more resources, and more opportunities for learning.

In an effort to ensure staff are utilizing the curriculum, the Education Specialist completes a fidelity of the curriculum checklist. These checklists are completed on each classroom yearly. The 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. 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.

Both 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.

Monitoring

As directed in the Head Start Performance Standards, our Head Start/Early Head Start utilizes on-going monitoring to measure program performance, identify areas of concern, make immediate program corrections, and generate reports. Head Start Specialists and Center Coordinators use the Monitoring Checklist to observe classrooms. The Education Specialist monitors the fidelity of the curriculum, and the CLASS Coordinator completes CLASS observations.

Classroom files are also monitored, and the classrooms are checked for the fidelity of the curriculum as well as for appropriate teacher-child interactions. These checks help ensure that the classroom has a relaxed and cheerful environment, intentional teaching is taking place, materials are prepared in advance, and that activities are designed to meet specific objectives for individual children. The safety of each classroom is monitored monthly.

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. The program met the 45-day deadline as required.

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 by both Early Head Start and Head Start 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. Center Coordinators review with each teaching team the results of each quarterly assessment, as well as the site and program results. In addition, data is shared with each partnering school system.

For the 2020-2021 school year, a Post Test was created from information related to the DIAL screening tool. This test was administered to the children who were given the DIAL screening tool in the fall and the results indicated improvements were made throughout the year.

Relationships with Local Education Agencies (LEA)

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. LEA's also have input in the adoption of our school readiness goals.

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 evidence-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.

Enrollees in action pact Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms showed continuous growth during the 2020-21 school year. The two oldest age groups of children had the strongest percentages meeting or exceeding expectations in 6 of the 8 School Readiness goals. Based on documentation for each of the eight designated goals, the data suggests that enrollees 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

Transition 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, setting up playdates with some of their future classmates, encouraging their child to discuss their fears, having 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.

We 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

All 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. From the Children's Perspective on ECLKC, Letting children talk 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 are distributed prior to the closing of school. The transition packets includes resources for parents with transitioning children which includes the following:

- 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

Nutrition

Action pact Head Start was proud to have been selected to receive a CACFP (Child and Adult Food Care Program) Meal Service Training Mini-Grant. The funds were used to enhance meal service for the children. We were also able to increase the number of fresh fruits and vegetables that was included on the menus.

During the pandemic, ensuring the children had meals while they were in quarantine was top priority. If a child was quarantined, they were provided with a shelf stable breakfast, lunch, and snack.

CLASS

The agency's CLASS Coordinator maintains current reliability in the Infant, Toddler and PreK CLASS tools. She also maintains CLASS Trainer credentials in both the Toddler and the PreK CLASS tools. Coaches and Center Coordinators have also received CLASS Reliability training.

During the 2020-2021 school year, 28 Head Start classrooms were monitored 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 20-21 school year showed 56% in Green, 29% in Yellow and 15% of dimension scores in Red which indicated growth in each area over the previous school year.

Program results are reflected in the following charts. This year the Designated Renewal System made changes that instituted a new Quality Threshold and a Competitive Threshold. The charts below show we were above each of the three Competitive Thresholds and were above the

Quality Thresholds in two of the three domains based on our in-house CLASS observations. The data was also compared to the National CLASS data and supported above average scores in both the Emotional Support and Instructional Support domains.

Results by Domain	2020-21 Avg	2019-20 Avg	Change	Rating
Emotional Support	6.21	6.10	0.11	Excellent (6.21)
Classroom Organization	5.74	5.58	0.16	Proficient (5.74)
Instructional Support	3.76	3.46	0.30	Approaching Proficient (3.76)

Results by Domain	Agency Avg	2020 Natl Avg	Deviation
Emotional Support	6.21	6.03	0.18
Classroom Organization	5.74	5.78	-0.04
Instructional Support	3.76	2.94	0.82

Domains	Agency Avg	Quality Threshold	Competitive Threshold
Emotional Support	6.21	6	5
Classroom Organization	5.74	6	5
Instructional Support	3.76	3	2.5

U =Unsatisfactory	AP =Approaching Proficient	P =Proficient	E =Excellent
1-2.99	3-4.99	5.00-5.99	6.00-7.00

Based upon review and discussion of CLASS, our program's areas of strength were identified as:

- CLASS training for all new classroom staff
- Above average Competitive Threshold scores in all domains
- 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

While 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. A sample of Early Head Start Toddler CLASS observation was also implemented with the expectation of additional observations beginning next school term. 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

In accordance with Performance Standards relating to Coaching, action pact has five individuals employed as coaches. Each Coach has a minimum of a baccalaureate degree in Early Childhood or a related field, which is the requirement for this position. Coaches have been trained in Practice Based Coaching and all have received their CLASS reliability in the PreK tool. All sites have a coach assigned to them which we feel has contributed to the improvement of action pact CLASS scores.

Teachers 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 teaching staff being coached 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.

Coaches and the CLASS Coordinator offered trainings during the summer. The following topics were included: Creative Curriculum, CLASS, TSG and ECERS. They also offer these trainings as part of new staff orientation.

Mental Health

For 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. Action pact Head Start and Early Head Start maintains a culture of caring. Above all, children are empowered and provided with a sense of belonging. When children feel confident, they also

develop a measure of resiliency that helps them navigate an unprecedented, disruptive time like this. The agency has a Licensed Professional Counselor on staff full-time to support the staff, children, and families in the Head Start program.

Action pact Head Start, and Early Head Start's Licensed Professional Counselor provides services to enrollees, families, and staff. All of our Head Start and Early Head Start sites are contacted frequently throughout the month by her and she is on-call for them in case an emergency or need arises to visit that center to provide services. Open, fluid communication is ongoing between our staff and counselor throughout the school year.

Mental Health is promoted in all components to ensure the children's overall health and well-being. Our counselor completes the referral process upon the parents' consent with an assessment of the referred child. She collaborates with the teaching staff to provide individualized strategies and techniques to help struggling children adapt to the classroom environment. Along with the strategies and techniques in the classrooms, the counselor can provide parents with similar strategies and techniques to ensure consistency in the classroom and home environments.

Regarding 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.

Exceptional Children's Week

Each 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 and the Council for Exceptional Children. 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.

Mrs. Stephanie McDonald, Mrs. Heather Rowland, and Mrs. Kayla Bennett from Jeff Davis County Head Start were recognized for their extra efforts in educating all children, including exceptional children. Mrs. McDonald, Mrs. Rowland and Mrs. Bennett structure their classroom to help all the children with special needs learn and participate in the many activities during the day. The teaching team works hard to celebrate the strengths and differences of each child, and their classroom is a happy, well organized, and productive place.

Mrs. Stephanie McDonald, Mrs. Heather Rowland, and Mrs. Kayla Bennett are team players and help each other by maintaining the routine for all the children in the classroom.



Disabilities

As the invasion of 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. As the COVID 19 virus cases continued to decline towards the beginning of 2020-2021 school year, strict in person services were reintegrated into the program. Meetings concerning IEPs/IFSPs were held mostly virtual while in person meetings began to start again. Families were given access to the Disabilities Specialist via phone calls, email and virtual if needed. The Special News Flash and Mental Health Tidbit newsletters were sent out to families via emails and sent home with students from in person teaching classrooms. The resources sent home included 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.

Children with special needs encompassed over 10% of the funded and current enrollment for the 2021-2022 program year. In the area of special needs, the Head Start and Early Head Start programs provided services for 131 Head Start children and Early Head Start children. Some of the services provided to the special needs 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.

We 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/national resources.

Our Disabilities Specialist even provided a doll for a hearing-impaired child that had a cochlear implant that looked just like her. This is just one of the many ways the program goes above and beyond for our children with special needs.

Training was accomplished on a one-on-one basis, with the parent's receiving information in the newsletters. The 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 2021-2022 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 20.93% of the program's current Enrollment and 14.67% of the program's Funded Enrollment.

Category	Head Start	Early Head Start
Vision Impairment	0	0
Hearing/Deafness	0	0
Deaf/Blind	1	1
Emotional Behavior	0	0
Autism	2	0
Health Impairment	0	4
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0
Learning Disability	0	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	1
Speech/Language	37	9
Developmental Delay	5	16
Intellectual Disabilities	0	0
Non-Categorized – Other	0	0
Multiple Disabilities	50	10
Total	95	36

Federal Review

On August 31, 2020, Action pact received a notice of competitive status due to deficiencies found on July 19, 2017 and May 6, 2019 by the Office of Head Start. Action pact was found to be deficient with the following requirement:

Head Start Performance Standard states, "a program must ensure all staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers abide by program's standards of conduct that ensure no child is left

alone or unsupervised by staff, consultants, contractors, or volunteers while under their care.” Although the agency has many child safety and supervision policies and procedures in place, staff failed to follow the policies leaving the agency out of compliance. The agency received Training and Technical Assistance from the Office of Head Start. In addition, the agency trained all parents, staff, volunteers, and consultants on Creating a Culture of Safety. A new monthly child supervision monitoring tool was added to ensure child supervision policies are being followed. The administrative team can monitor the centers remotely. Due to the many policies and procedures the agency has in place, there have been no further child supervision incidents. Action pact has zero tolerance for any employee leaving a child alone and unsupervised.

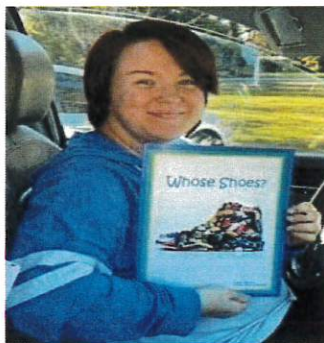
An application was submitted in January of 2021. On June 22, 2021, the agency received notification that the grant was awarded.

Emergent & Family Literacy

Emergent 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, JumpStart Read for the Record, Georgia Read Aloud Day, and others were held. Due to COVID we were unable to offer the Pajama Reading Night at our local libraries as well as Family Reading Night. We hope to be able to offer these back next program year.

Parents 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 Family Advocate staff. As an added benefit, the participants have also become more active at the center attending the various other events and workshops.

During the 2020-2021 school year, action pact produced and published the book, “Who’s Shoes”. Dr. Shelli Tyre, Deputy Director, was the author of the book. The book was focused on career choices. Children in the Head Start program were selected to be photographed to represent their career choice.



Children and staff enjoyed a Storybook Parade in October of 2020. Children and staff dressed as characters from their favorite storybook. Staff read many books to the children and made this a memorable event for the children.



Professional Development

Action 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. The Deputy Director of the agency is a Certified John Maxwell Trainer and offers various trainings to the Head Start staff. Pre-service and in-service trainings are approved for state approved hours, and staff received trainings throughout the year. Staff have also been able to take advantage of several online state-approved trainings. The program's Training Specialist has presented training at state and regional conferences as well as to other Head Start and child-care programs.

During the summer of 2021, staff were offered training opportunities. Staff attended the following trainings:

- Science is Fun
- Shake, Rattle, and Roll
- Steps to Literacy
- Early Head Start Back to Basics
- Taste Testing
- The Power of Five
- Everyone Communicates, Few Connect
- Change Your World
- Teaching Strategies Gold
- Creative Curriculum
- CLASS Reliability
- Time Management & Electrical Risk
- Fire Safety, CPR, and First Aid

- Family Partnerships
- Second Step

Action pact hosted the annual “Live2Lead” event and many Head Start staff participated in the event. Live2 Lead is a half-day, leader development experience designed to equip attendees with new perspectives, practical tools and key takeaways.



Staff 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.

The Head Start program completed the national pilot program for training that specifically is geared to the ECERS and ITERS ratings through the Branaugh Group. Action pact was one of the first program’s in the nation to participate in the program. Staff were able to utilize these trainings to help prepare for Quality Rating.

All action pact Head Start teachers have an AA degree or higher and meet the Federal mandate. Additionally, over 60% of Head Start teachers have a BA degree or higher, exceeding the 50% requirement. From August, 2020 - July, 2021, action pact staff completed the following training hours:

- ❖ Over **1,770** hours of college)
- ❖ Over **3,400** hours of other type of training
- ❖ Over **3,000** hours DECAL approved training
- ❖ All Early Head Start teachers have a minimum CDA in infant/toddler or higher credential