

action pact

Head Start

2021-2022 Annual Report



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AGENCY MISSION

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

We strive to create equal opportunity by prioritizing progress over programs. To succeed, our staff of nearly 400 have to work as one team moving toward a common goal. This requires strong, diverse, and passionate leaders.

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: Board Members: Rose Bailey, Cathy Benton, Ethelyn Creech, Sam Edgar, Michael Garvin, William George, Walter C. Gibson, Bishop Michael-Angelo James, Bobby Kennedy, Linda McDuffie, Dr. Kim Morgan, Anthony Simmons, Tina Smith, James A. Thomas, Sr., and Clarence Washington. Ex-Officio Member: James Gandy

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



It is my honor and privilege to serve as action pact's Executive Director. With services in more than 40 counties, we strive to make the communities we serve even stronger.

Action pact's vision is to see all of our neighborhoods full of folks who can boost their education, support their families, solve any setbacks that come their way, and contribute to their communities. When this happens, individuals are strengthened, families are strengthened, communities are strengthened, and everyone wins.

Action pact's Head Start program plays a major role in our vision. For many families, Head Start is the first step in building a strong educational foundation. The program provides quality care, education, and nutrition to children so their parents can work and/or attend school, establishes parents as their child's first and most important teachers, and engages families in growth and leadership opportunities.

A Message from the Head Start Director

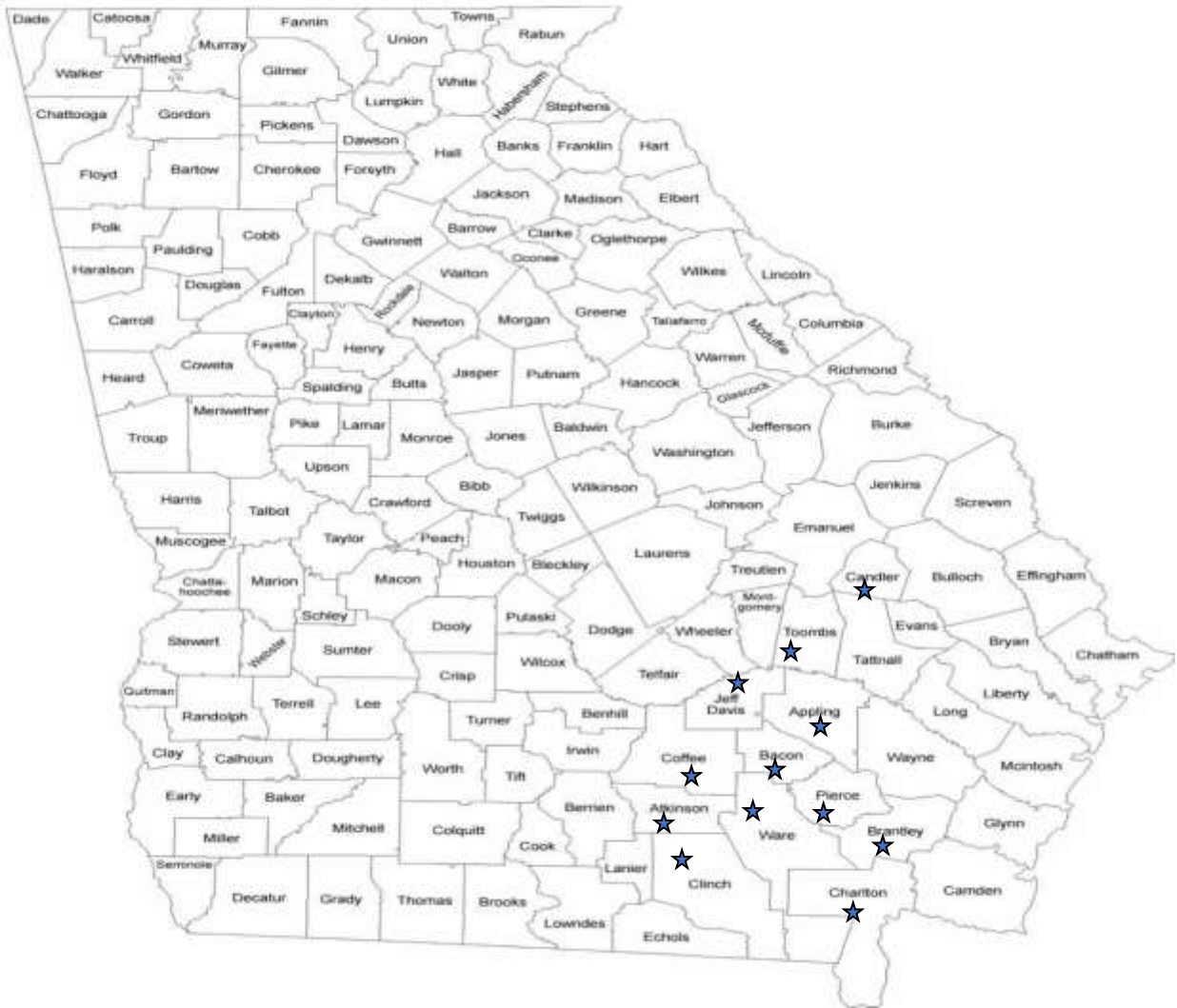
Action pact's Head Start program continues to thrive. The Head Start program provides 900 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families, with high-quality, comprehensive services which include: education, health, nutrition, mental health, disabilities, family engagement, male involvement, school readiness, and transition. Ensuring the safety and supervision of the children we serve is top priority. 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 2021-2022 program year. Comprehensive services were provided to 248 Early Head Start infants, toddlers, and/or expectant families. In addition, we served 652 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.

The areas marked with a star (★) indicates Action Pact, Inc. Head Start program's service area;



County Numbers	EHS Classrooms	EHS Funded Slots	HS Classrooms	HS Funded Slots
Appling	2	16	2	34
Atkinson	3	24	2	34
Bacon	3	24	3	53
Brantley	1	8	2	32
Candler	3	24	1	17
Charlton	2	16	2	34
Clinch	2	16	1	16
Coffee	2	16	4	74
Jeff Davis	0	0	2	36
Pierce	1	8	3	54
Toombs	2	16	2	54
Ware	10	80	14	235
Totals	31	248	40	652

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 and children attend 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 **31** Early Head Start classrooms and **40** Head Start classrooms. There are **17** Head Start/Early Head Start centers in **12** counties and one Head Start administration office located in Waycross.

Staff of the Year

Congratulations to all those individuals who were selected in their categories for Staff of the year. Action pact Head Start has the best staff!

Overall Staff of the Year	Carol Clarke	Training/Literacy Specialist
Center Coordinator	Crystal White	Pierce
Teacher	Breonna Milton	Charlton
Teacher Assistant	Shantier Coffee	Ware
Floater	Kay Brown	Atkinson
Custodian	Robert Owens	Hazzard Hill
Coach	Caroline Thomas	Bacon
Family Advocate	LaCarol Cummings	Pearson
Cook	Clara Jackson	Toombs
Interventionist	Charlene Johnson	Brantley

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 2021-2022 Program Year are as follows:

<u>Short Term Goals:</u>	<u>Long Term Goals:</u>
Strive for zero supervision or safety incidents	Add multi-purpose rooms at each center that doesn’t currently have one
Replace Pierce County playground equipment	Replace classroom furniture
Maintain Quality Rating at all centers	Replace playground equipment in Coffee, Atkinson (Willacoochee), and Charlton County
Train all EHS staff on CLASS	
Conduct CLASS observations on all EHS classrooms at least once per program year	
CLASS Certify all Center Coordinators	
Improve front door security systems	
Strive for at least 1500 volunteers in EHS, HS, and Pre-k combined	
Have at least 30% of families in a family partnership	
25% of Head Start & Pre-K classrooms will have all greens on CLASS observations	
Full enrollment in Early Head Start and Head Start for the 2021-2022 program year	
Meet the in-kind goal of \$2,719,789 for Fiscal Year 2021	
Maintain a waitlist for Early Head Start of at least 150 and a waitlist of at least 75 for Head Start	
Less than 10% of Head Start staff turnover	
Fill open positions within 2 weeks	

STARS Program

Action pact is committed to building leaders. The STARS program was developed in-house and strategically trains and equips future leaders by helping them develop and hone their leadership skills, in addition to exploring and gaining hands-on experience in each of the agency’s departments. To date, more than 30 Head Start staff have successfully completed the year-long STARS program, with several being promoted into positions of increased responsibility within the agency.

Quality Rated

During the 2021-2022 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. Two centers had their reassessment: Bacon Northside and Candler, both of which earned 3 stars. A number of centers are scheduled to be reassessed during the 2022-2023 program year. 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	3 Stars - increase from 2 stars
Bacon Southside	2 Stars
Bacon at ABC	2 Stars
Brantley HS	3 Stars – increase from 2 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

Entering our second year of COVID challenges, Action Pact’s Head Start and Early Head Start Program was able to remain open and continue in-person, full day services to children in Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K during the pandemic. Unlike previous school years, in which parents walked their children to the classrooms, all centers continued using a drive through drop off and pick up system for daily arrival and departure of students. Head Start staff continued to wear 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. This also remains the policy for staff and allowed visitors to each site.

Due to COVID, 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. Although isolation, quarantine, and vaccination guidance were constantly changing, action pact was able to maintain compliance with the Center of Disease Control Guidance and The Head Start Health Performance Standards. Families continue to be 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 Head Start and Early Head Start future activities.

Health

Finding medical and dental homes for children continues to be a challenge as providers continue to reduce taking new patients and reducing some of the services that were previously provided. COVID has also created long waiting time for medical appointments for our families. Action pact was able to address vision screening challenges by partnering with Prevent Blindness Georgia. Our Family Advocates 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. To continue to assist families that lack insurance or a provider source, Action Pact is working with partner agencies to be able to do valuable hearing screening in addition to vision screening. Action pact has purchased hearing and vision equipment and are now working with providers to train staff to use the equipment. Action pact continues our partnership with the South Georgia State College Nursing program to assist our sites with our yearly growth and weight assessments. We have purchased additional needleless hemoglobin machines for sites to screen children without hemoglobin screenings by their providers. Action pact staff continue to keep the Health and Safety of our children and staff a top priority of our program.

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.

Regular Budget			
	Head Start	Early Head Start	Total
Program Operations	\$6,707,328	\$4,890,123	\$11,597,451
T/TA	\$71,720	\$72,350	\$144,070
Non Federal Share	\$1,375,854	\$1,003,096	\$2,378,950
Total	\$8,154,902	\$5,965,569	\$14,120,471

Financial Audit

The annual agency audit was conducted by McNair, McLemore, Middlebrooks, & Company. The agency audit report is available online at the Federal Audit Clearinghouse, facweb.census.gov.

Monitoring and Self-Assessment

A new tool was used for self-assessment, the MRI (Management Review Instrument for Head Start and Early Head Start Evaluation/Self-Assessment). Self-Assessment training was held on March 3, 2022, at which time the Training Specialist shared the self-assessment tool with the Head Start administrative team. The Head Start Director assigned each administrative staff a section of the self-assessment monitoring tool to complete. The self-assessment was conducted from April 4-21, 2022. Timelines for the self-assessment were established, and the Head Start Director assigned areas for review in each component. In view of continued 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 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.

All centers were monitored twice during the year by State licensing as well as leadership team members on a routine basis and two centers underwent their Quality Rated reassessment. Each center was monitored extensively by a leadership team member at least monthly. Additionally, we are monitored by State Pre-K and CACFP (Child & Adult Food Program).

Facilities

The program was extremely fortunate to continue to make a number of significant improvements to the facilities – both inside and out. All but one playground now has rubberized fall zones, which has improved safety as well as no longer needing staff to replace chips and monitor the depth of the chips to ensure they meet licensing requirements. (The one playground that does not have a rubberized surfacing is owned by another entity).

Most of the centers had covered walkways installed so children and staff would not get wet during drop off and pick up. New play areas were made using the existing playground space so that more children are able to be outside at the same time. This keeps the classrooms separated and allows for better safety and supervision. New play structures are now on all of the Early Head Start and Head Start playgrounds. Newer structures purchased require less maintenance and replaced structures that, in some cases, were over 25 years old.

Upgrading of cameras and security systems has been ongoing which has an added benefit of improving virtual monitoring as well. Plans are continuing to purchase, as funds become available, additional outdoor items to help bring the “classroom” outdoors.



POWER Payments



Eligible staff were able to apply for two rounds of \$1,000 supplemental payments known as POWER, for Providing Our Workforce Essential Recognition, these payments are a small yet significant way to recognize the dedication and hard work shown during the COVID 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 boost for staff to receive these funds. Payments arrived during the winter and summer months.

Farm to Early Childhood

We continue to embrace the "Farm to ECE" movement and have increased gardening and taste testing activities at the centers. 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. A number of classrooms also added aerogardens to their rooms.

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. This partnership is part of a pilot program that other groups hope to duplicate in other areas.

We had the first of two distribution cycles of six weeks each. Participants signed up, at the cost of \$5.00, per week for the produce bag which was valued at \$20-\$25/week. Families were also able to utilize their SNAP (food stamps) benefits toward that as well. Each bag also contains recipes that can be used with the ingredients as well as information on the local farmers. The feedback has been wonderful and the families report trying new vegetables. Georgia Organics has also been able to provide training for staff and families and has received word that the grant, with an increased amount, has been renewed for the upcoming program year.



The Ware County Head Start Center was honored by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp for their work in farm to early care and education. Governor Kemp, in awarding the commendation, noted that action pact's Head Start program participates in the Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education Learning Collaborative, and is an ambassador promoting nutrition and physical education.

The center staff has enthusiastically jumped into the farm to early child care initiative with nutrition education, gardens, taste testing and other exciting activities for the children and their families.

Parenting Curriculum

The Performance Standards requires programs to have a parenting curriculum for parents. We were excited to bring Ready Rosie to our parents this year. Ready Rosie is a research-based curriculum that builds on parents' knowledge. It uses video and mobile technology to allow schools and families to work together to promote school readiness. Ready Rosie has over 1,000 "modeled moments" videos in English and Spanish. These videos are delivered to families by text, email, or app and are available to families 24/7. Ready Rosie provides programs with the means to reach all families and to customize and individualize as needed.

Thanks to a grant provided by Truist Bank, we were also able to offer the Nurturing Parenting Curriculum to parents in six counties: Appling, Brantley, Candler, Coffee, Toombs, and Ware. In virtual "Powerful Parents" classes, parents that participated learned about 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". Parents received incentives for participation, including a book and literacy activity for each lesson attended. Other incentives included "literacy dollars" they used to receive literacy materials such as books, puzzles, or learning toys.

What To Do When You're Having A Baby

For 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 still not able to come into the centers due to the pandemic, so we selected this 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 bag items were donated by community partners.

Family Services

The 2021-2022 school year applications were accepted in person and over the phone. Our enrollment numbers slowly increased through the 2021-2022 school year from 481 in Head Start to 566 and from 172 in Early Head Start to 203. Unfortunately, due to COVID, we were not able to meet full enrollment in either program during the school year. Also, due to staff shortages, some of the Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms were closed. To help with recruitment, a Human Resources Specialist was hired. Additional floaters were also hired to help with classroom coverage.

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 continuing again this year, however, 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, Child Abuse Prevention, managed health care provider information, Fire Safety, Child Safety, Enrollment/Re-enrollment, Transitioning and Kindergarten Readiness, Health Dept. information, and Healthy Lifestyles. Parents receive monthly texts and/or emails containing parent resources or information. 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) virtual workshops, "Home

Ownership” and “Credit Ratings” virtual trainings – provided by Truist Bank, and “Food Talk: Better U” and “Walk-a-Weigh” classes - provided by UGA Extension. Also, as an extra resource to our families, we were able to provide home safety items this year, such as outlet covers and cabinet locks. Families complete a Family Assessment twice a year and one question does ask if they need these items. The Family Advocates review the assessments and if any parents reply that they need the safety items, they are sent to the parents.

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, 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 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 continuing pandemic, virtual meetings were held again 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 representative slots and seven community representative slots. 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 — currently vacant; Bacon — Director of ABC Child Development Center; Brantley – School Psychologist Intern; Charlton — Director of Emergency Management, Coffee — retired Educator, Jeff Davis — Special Education Director; and Ware – Librarian. Members may serve for up to a maximum of five years on the Policy Council.

Education

This is a critical time in our enrollees’ 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 in each classroom yearly. The Daily Resources that are 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 confidence in themselves as learners.

Both curriculums, The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos and the Creative Curriculum for Preschool supply our staff with a solid foundation. These foundations consist of volumes that provide theory, research, and best practices for responsive teachers. The resources 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. We are also planning on implanting "curriculum boxes" for centers/classrooms that need additional materials to enhance their "studies."

Monitoring

As directed in the Head Start Performance Standards, our Head Start/Early Head Start Programs utilize 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. We also use the ITERS and ECERS tools to monitor. These tools are used when preparing for Quality Rating.

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. Any safety concerns are addressed immediately and 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. Our 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 2021-2022 school year, a Post Test was created from information related to the DIAL screening tool. This test was administered to the children in our Pre-k classrooms. The results of the post test indicated improvements were made during the year.

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. LEA's also have input in the adoption of our school readiness goals. We also have an Education/Disabilities Agreement with our LEA's.

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 as needed 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 school readiness 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 in the areas of language and literacy, problem-solving skills, and 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 2021-22 school year. The two oldest age groups of children had the strongest percentages meeting or exceeding expectations in 7 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 parents about what his or her first day at kindergarten/preschool will be like. We want to ensure the parents display 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.

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 Pre-K and 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); and Provide Get Ready for Preschool A starter kit for You and Your Child which includes: 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); and a 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 video entitled, "From the Children's Perspective", it explains how the transition to kindergarten looks through the eyes of a child. For those children transitioning out of Head Start/Early Head Start, our staff provides support through transition in the following ways:

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

Transition packets are distributed prior to the closing of school. The transition packets include 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!; and Your Child's Education – You Can Make a Difference.

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 2021-2022 school year, Head Start classrooms were monitored using the CLASS Pre-K 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.

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

- CLASS training for all new classroom staff
- Extensive "Coach" training
- Individualized coaching
- Coaching successes evidenced in CLASS 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. 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 Pre-K 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 for 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 training during the summer of 2021. The following topics were included: Creative Curriculum, CLASS, TSG, ECERS, and ITERS. These trainings are also offered as part of new staff orientation.

Nutrition

Action pact Head Start was proud to have been selected to receive a CACFP (Child and Adult Food Care Program) Taste Testing Grant for our Appling Head Start Center for the 2022-2023 program year. We are also planning on working with a local food cooperative, WayGreen, to investigate the possibility of offering more local and fresh vegetables.

We are excited to have received word that the Coffee County Head Start Center has been awarded a CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) grant which will include a fully functional kitchen. Once that work is completed, we will no longer have to contract for food services in that county. Additionally, plans are underway

for the 2022-2023 program year to be able to provide meals on site in our Clinch County facility with the purchase of a fully functional "food truck."

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 Mental Health Specialist and a Licensed Professional Counselor on staff. Both Mental Health staff members work 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.

The DESSERTS mental health event involves working with all our staff. DESSERTS stands for STRESSED when spelled backwards. During our training on ways to relieve stress we offer some sweets and treats for our staff with a calm, inviting atmosphere to enjoy and learn ways to decompress at the end of the day. Along with the DESSERTS training, the Mental Health Specialist sends out the monthly Mental Health TID-BIT to families with resources and information on Mental Health issues affecting people today.

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.

Victoria West and Dixie Dunnigan from Bacon County Head Start and Claudette Williams from Hazzard Hill were recognized for their extra efforts in educating all children, including exceptional children. The winning teaching staff structure their classrooms to help all the children with special needs learn and participate in the many activities during the day. The teachers work hard to celebrate the strengths and differences of each child, and their classroom is a happy, well organized, and productive place.

These winning staff members are team players and help each other by maintaining the routine for all the children in the classroom.



Disabilities

As the restrictions regarding COVID turn from isolation to in-person services at schools, Local Education Agencies and private providers are stepping back into the school environment. Meetings concerning IEPs/IFSPs continue to happen both virtually and in person. Families were given access to the Disabilities Specialist via in person, phone calls, email and virtually if needed. The Special News Flash and Mental Health Tidbit newsletters were sent out to families via email and sent home with students from in-person teaching classrooms. The resources sent home included COVID-related answers to questions and guidance on how to stay safe and healthy as new variants of the virus continue to develop.

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 123 Head Start children and Early Head Start children. Some of the services provided to the children with special needs included the least restrictive environment and inclusive classrooms. Every classroom, along with the inclusion classrooms, were provided 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 staffing 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.

This year, the Atlanta based life sized puppet show, The Kids On the Block, came into our Pre-K classrooms virtually. Our Pre-K classrooms enjoyed multiple shows on mental health/disabilities. The shows were great, and the children paid attention. Getting younger children to pay attention for a length of time speaks volumes for the presentation.

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 accounted for 17.13 % of the program's Current Enrollment and 16.06% of the program's Funded Enrollment.

Category	Head Start	Early Head Start
Vision Impairment	0	0
Hearing/Deafness	0	0
Deaf/Blind	0	0
Emotional Behavior	0	0
Autism	3	2
Health Impairment	1	0
Traumatic Brain Injury	0	0
Learning Disability	2	0
Orthopedic Impairment	0	0
Speech/Language	36	3
Developmental Delay	9	11
Intellectual Disabilities (Formerly known as Mental Retardation)	0	0
Non-Categorized – Other	0	0
Multiple Disabilities	50	6
Total	101	22

Federal Review

On March 21, 2022, the Office of Head Start conducted a monitoring review. Based on the review, a determination was made that Action Pact, Inc. had at least one area of deficiency. Following an extensive investigation, the Office of Head Start closed the previously identified finding and the deficiency was corrected.

A Focus Area One Federal Monitoring Review is scheduled for the week of January 23, 2023.

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. Several of our centers have local groups that fund their participation in the First Foundation for Childhood Literacy. Additionally, the program has been informed that we received a matching Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) grant for the upcoming program year.

Parents are encouraged to complete their high school education, and family advocate staff refer families to their local adult education centers.

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; one certified Family Development Credential trainer; one nationally certified playground inspector; and one Darkness to Light instructor. Due to COVID guidelines we were not able to gather for in-person pre-service but were able to meet virtually. 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 and is able to offer in-person trainings to staff in keeping with COVID distancing guidelines.

Staff members are able to take advantage of DECAL incentives and scholarship funds which are 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 and has increased the minimum amount earned which has allowed additional staff to be eligible. The Training Specialist contacts staff members informing them that they may be eligible for this DECAL program and assists them with the application process.

All action pact Head Start teachers have an AA degree or higher and meet the Federal mandate or have a waiver in place as well as an professional development plan in place. Professional development plans are completed by staff and reviewed by the Head Start Director, Assistant Head Start Director and Training Specialist, and training scheduled as needed.

We have continued to enhance and improve the onboarding training for new staff including intensive training in Teaching Strategies, Safety and Supervision, Anecdots, just to name a few. Staff also are mentored by seasoned staff and observe for approximately two weeks prior to being assigned to a classroom.