Directors Letter

Although this is my 13th year as Director of Yolo County Early Childhood Education, I continue to be truly impressed by the impact of our Head Start/Early Head Start program on the lives of children and families in our community. This past year was no exception. From the moment families walk through the doors of their child’s classroom, they enter a world of welcome, safety, and engagement. In alignment with the first Multicultural Principal for Head Start Programs – Every Individual is Rooted in Culture – our program staff interact with each child as a unique individual. We are committed to supporting all children within the context of each family’s strengths and culture, and our child outcomes continue to reflect the effectiveness of this approach in cultivating children’s cognitive, physical, and social development.

The following pages map our journey during the 2016-2017 school year. Thank you for joining us as we continue to fulfill the promise of Head Start Programs to “prepare America’s most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school.”

Best to All,

Gail Nadal
A Parent’s Perspective

My 7-year old daughter started in the Head Start program when she was four years old, and it was an awesome experience. When she came in, she was very shy and closed off. During her first year in the program, I saw so much growth! She opened up, became confident, and learned so much including her letters and numbers. But I really noticed the change in her when she went to kindergarten. She carried confidence and an ability to learn, and easily connected with the kindergarten teachers and her new classmates.

My youngest daughter is 3 years old, and she is now enrolled in Head Start. I have no doubt in my mind that she’s going to grow even more because of this program. She has already bloomed like a wildflower. The work that Head Start staff does combined with the work that I put into her education helps us as a team to see my daughter’s best potential.

I also just finished serving on Policy Council, and I think they are doing a phenomenal job. I’ve been impressed with how the program is steadily growing and continuing to find new ways to accommodate family needs. The program staff really operate as a team in all they do. The opportunities for both children and parents to be involved are amazing, and staff are so willing to educate and support us as families.

As parents, we drop our children off and we know they’re going to learn. But after being involved in Head Start, I could not wait to apply all that I’ve learned from the program to my children’s lives. The program is way bigger than what we might think it is, and I am blessed to have these people help me teach my children. My daughters are very bright, and I know without a doubt that Head Start has had a huge part to play in that.

-Megan Tayborne, YCOE Head Start Parent
Our Families: We are pleased to report that during the 2016-2017 program year, YCOE served a combined total of 337 families - including 368 children – through our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Our program successes did not end in May, though, as YCOE’s seven extended classrooms continued to touch the lives of children and their families during the summer months.

Enrollment for Preschool age children:
Of the 280 Head Start children participated in services during the 2016-17 program year:
- 59% were 4 year olds
- 33% were 3 year olds
- 48% were female
- 52% were male
- 13% had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- 90% were Hispanic or Latino Origin
- 10% were Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino Origin
- 48% were English Speaking
- 52% were Spanish Speaking
- 3% were Middle Eastern or South Asian languages
- 7% were East Asian Language

Enrollment for Infants and Toddlers: Of the 88 Early Head Start children who participated in services during the 2016-2017 program year:
- 36% were under 12 months of age
- 45% were 12—24 months of age
- 61% were 24—36 months of age
- 7% were 3 year of age
- 55% were female
- 45% were male
- 8% had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- 93% were Hispanic or Latino Origin
- 22% were Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino Origin
- 31% were English Speaking
- 88% were Spanish Speaking (including bi-lingual families)
- 1% were Middle Eastern or South Asian Languages
- 2% were East Asian Language
- 12% were European or Slavic Language

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Head Start Enrollment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Enrolled</td>
<td>88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attended less than 45 days</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Lead tests</td>
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Our Approach—Family Partnerships

The YCOE Early Childhood Education Department has been very successful with the Family Partnership process which is now aligned with the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework. We administer the Family Engagement Survey each year to identify family strengths, goals, and areas in need of additional support. In establishing goals during the 2016-2017 program year, our families prioritized the areas of Family Engagement in Transitions, Family Well-Being, Families as Learners, Positive Parent-Child Relationships, and Families as Lifelong Educators.

Family Engagement Outcomes

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<th>Early Head Start</th>
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<td>Family Well Being</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Parent-Child Relationships</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families As Lifelong Educators</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families As Learners</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement In Transition</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Additionally, all families are invited to participate in a variety of activities to strengthen family partnerships and overall engagement, including:

- The Policy Council (PC)
- Classroom activities
- Development, evaluation and overall conduct of the program
- Parent activities, such as parent meetings and family events
- In-Kind
- Parent workshops and trainings

The Policy Council (PC) is made up of 51% of Head Start/Early Head Start Program parents throughout Yolo County. The PC is designed to ensure that parents from all program options have the opportunity to be involved in shared decision making that directly impacts the programs and services available through the Head Start/Early Head Start program.

Family Engagement and Literacy

As part of our Family Engagement component, YCOE’s Head Start/Early Head Start Program offers numerous literacy events each year including parent workshops, Raising a Reader program that bridges literacy from school to home environments, and Lending Library visits during monthly parent meetings during which parents can check out educational toys and/or books. We were also thrilled at the success of our Dr. Seuss Day, during which community dignitaries are invited to our Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms to read to our children. YCOE participates annually in Dr. Seuss Day in conjunction with the National Education Association’s “Read Across America Day”, an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading on March 2, the birthday of the famed children’s author Dr. Seuss.

The National Education Association (NEA) provides members, parents, caregivers, and children with the resources and activities that are needed to keep reading on the calendar 365 days a year. The Yolo County Office of Education paired with the NEA to bring these resources and activities to our Head Start preschool children in March of 2017.

Our community officials recognize the importance of reading and literacy, and were more than willing to participate in the Read Across America Celebration with our Head Start/Early Head Start students. Police officers, the mayor, the librarian, grandparents, parents, and high school teenagers from our local community volunteered to read to the children throughout the day.

Parents attended the event and engaged in learning activities that were based on the books written by Dr. Seuss. All activities were literacy extensions of the many books authored by Dr. Theodor Seuss. Nutrition activities included making “Green Eggs and Ham”, Math Activities involved counting apples and were based upon the book “Ten Apples Up On Top”. Other cognitive activities included matching mother animals to their babies, i.e., a Horse and a colt, and were based upon the book “Are You My Mother”. Parents and children alike used their creativity and dressed up in character costumes such as "The Cat in the Hat", "The Grinch", and "Thing One and Thing Two".

Motivating children to read is an important factor in student achievement and creating lifelong successful readers. The annual “Read Across America” event at the Yolo County Office of Education allowed us to do just that!
Recruitment and Enrollment

YCOE assumes a strategic approach to recruiting to ensure our community’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families are served through the Head Start/Early Head Start Program. We began intensive recruitment for fall 2016 enrollment during the previous spring, and continued with outreach activities throughout the 2016-2017 program year.

Our recruitment staff use every tool in their toolkit to reach families, with a focused emphasis on targeting rural areas where families often encounter barriers to participation such as transportation and access to written materials in the home language of the family. Our community partners - from churches, schools and clinics to public and private agencies - are essential to this outreach. Community partners support our recruitment efforts by posting information, sharing Head Start/Early Head Start Program information with their clients, referring children and families, and providing space for information booths.

Door-to-door outreach is one of our most effective means of reaching families, and the recruitment team is tireless in their approach! Equipped with backpacks and portable printers, staff knock on doors where they suspect kids may live due to clues such as toys in the area near the home. Portable printers allow us to make copies of all documents needed to bring a family into the Head Start or Early Head Start Program. Backpacks are filled with information about the program as well as toys to engage children while we are working with parents and other family members. All recruitment activities are conducted in the primary language of the family, and recruitment team members don’t hesitate to engage other Head Start/Early Head Start staff to provide translation when needed.

“Even after hours, if our recruitment staff see someone in the community who they think could benefit from Head Start or Early Head Start, they engage with the family and give them a program application.”
Amelia Abonce, Family Support Services Specialist

Recruitment and Enrollment

We believe that from the first day of enrollment, parents are vital in developing their child’s goals for the school year. Head Start/Early Head Start teachers use home visits to discuss child/family goals and how to implement these goals in the classroom. Our staff also use daily communication (either verbal or written) with parents to keep them informed of their child’s progress, which complement parent conferences and home visits held throughout the year. These conferences are a great venue for teachers and parents to make the home to school connection and ensure goals at school align with goals at home.

The Head Start/Early Head Start program continues to be focused on the effort to increase the number of fathers/guardians participating at all levels of the ECE Program. The focus includes outreach efforts by teachers, information about the importance of fathers/guardians in their children’s education and father/guardian events.

At YCOE, we are committed to providing services that fully engage families in their child’s education. We believe that parents are their child’s first and most influential teacher, and all aspects of our work is guided by this philosophy.
Education

Our Head Start and Early Head Start staff have a natural love for children that shows each day through their acceptance, understanding, and nurturing. We truly believe that our parents are the first and most influential teachers of their children, and we partner with parents to help children in their developmental progression by providing a multitude of opportunities to learn and grow. Children in our program spend time in inviting settings where they have the opportunity to develop positive habits, enjoy play with learning materials, and work on tasks with friends. We witness firsthand when these children leave Head Start how prepared they are for kindergarten, excited about learning, and ready to succeed!

Our teaching staff utilize both the California Department of Education’s Preschool Curriculum Guide and the Creative Curriculum to ensure best practices in early childhood education and support children to successfully transition to the K-12 school system. Our teachers guide in-depth exploration spanning 3-5 weeks per topic, culminating with an activity involving the entire family that connects to the lesson plan. At the close of the Creative Curriculum’s Clothing Unit, teaching staff sent home paper bags for children and families to decorate as clothing. The following week, Head Start classrooms hosted a fashion show for families during which children proudly wore what they had created. Additionally, during the Recycling Unit, children and their families made robots out of recycled materials and brought their homemade creations to school for display.

“Loose Parts” enables children to play with open ended learning materials and tools to manipulate them in a variety of ways and subsequently expand learning. This hands-on naturalistic play called “Loose Parts”.

Mentor/Coaches

During the 2016-2017 school year, five coaches worked across Yolo County with our Infant, Toddler and Preschool classrooms to build classroom quality and teacher support. Additionally, thirty-one early childhood classrooms have been positively supported by the Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) initiative derived via California Department of Education to improve and build classroom quality. Teachers have gained new knowledge around teacher-child interactions, environmental set up, teaching best practices and professional development.

School Readiness

YCOE HS / EHS School Readiness goals have been updated to support the current needs of the children. To best support the children in our program we promote a strong connection between home and school. Our extended year classrooms, seven total, continued to serve children until June 30th. This extension helped to shorten the gap of learning opportunities for children transitioning to Kindergarten.

“The Creative Curriculum is laid out for both ease of use and hands-on learning. One example of this is the Mighty Minute Card, a transition card that teachers will use to engage children in being responsive to the material being presented through lesson plans. These cards are a great tool to help children relate to a particular idea connected to the curriculum.”
- Katherine Rangel, YCOE Education Specialist

“The Head Start staff work really hard by advocating for our children and doing whatever is needed to keep our children learning. This program is teaching our children resilience, confidence, respect, and ways to communicate. I love it!”
- YCOE Head Start Parent
Our Impact

YCOE Head Start / Early Head Start has transitioned to the new DRDP Tech 2015. The updated assessment tool offers a seamless transition from the Infant/Toddler DRDP Tech to the Preschool DRDP Tech. The DRDP Tech is aligned with all three volumes of CDE Preschool Foundations and Frameworks and Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. YCOE uses both preschool and infant/toddler lesson plans to ensure the foundations are offered through age-appropriate activities and experiences based on the needs of each individual child.

Transitioning to Kindergarten

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children. Our program has developed School Readiness Goals that are based on the needs of the children and families in the program. Even in infancy, the program has developed age- and developmentally-appropriate goals for children and families. These goals are in the domains of Language and Literacy, Cognition, Approaches to Learning, Physical health and motor development and social and emotional development, which align to the Head Start Framework and CDE Preschool Foundations. Implementing and measuring progress toward school readiness goals helps to individualize for each child and ensure that children know and can do what is needed to be ready for kindergarten.

The children in the program are assessed three times per year using the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) and individual child goals are developed with the parent. With each assessment period, parents and teachers meet to discuss progress and update or build new goals. Staff use observations and work samples to determine the strengths and areas of need for the child and support these strengths and needs through classroom activities.

The Head Start/Early Head Start staff begins the Transition to Kindergarten process at the beginning of the year. Kindergarten Readiness activities are offered to children such as story books about moving on to kindergarten, a visit from a Kindergarten teacher and a visit to an Elementary Kindergarten class. The Head Start/Early Head Start program offers a Kindergarten Round Table which provides parents an opportunity to meet and greet elementary school staff and support for Kindergarten Registrations, which includes sharing of Health information. At the end of the year, children and families are given a Moving On to Kindergarten book that includes activities and resources to support the family and child over the summer months.
Mental Health

During the 2016-2017 program year, our program partnered with a Mental Health Consultant to provide mental health services and support to enrolled children and families. This consultant identified emerging mental health needs of the children and/or families using culturally sensitive strategies, and referred families when needed for more intensive services. Mental health intervention and prevention strategies included observations, modeling, building and implementing positive behavioral support plans for children with externalizing or challenging mental health behaviors. We offered services through a pyramid approach by providing a positive environment, positive teacher strategies, and individual interventions. We also provided Positive Parenting training in close alignment with the pyramid approach used in the classroom.

Disabilities

The YCOE Head Start/Early Head Start Program Special Services component includes support for children with disabilities or other special needs. Children who have an active IEP are included in the classroom. The program supports the idea of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and works closely with the Infant Program or School District to ensure that the IEP goals and individual needs of the child are being met. Often this is the first exposure children have in an early childhood environment and potential concerns are just surfacing for some children. In those cases, the teaching staff, the family and the Special Services staff work together to refer the child to the appropriate agency for further evaluation. As part of the Head Start grant, the program musts maintain a 10% enrollment of children with an active IEP or IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan).

It Takes a Village

The Yolo County Office of Education Head Start/Early Head Start Program depends on the support of Collaborative Partners to offer the best, most comprehensive services for the children and families in our program. Collaborative partners are:

- First 5 Yolo
- Alta California Regional Center
- Yolo Health Department
- Farm to Fork
- Yolo County Department of Employment
- Yolo County Department of Social Services
- Yolo County Children’s Alliance
- Rise, Inc.
- University of California, Davis
- Yolo County Office of Education Regional Occupational Program (ROP)/Career Technical Education (CTE)
- Yolo County Mental Health Program
- SELPA
- Yolo County First Steps Infant Program
- Yolo County School Districts
Health and Nutrition

At YCOE, we believe that good health provides an important foundation for children. Studies show that low-income children don’t always receive all of their required immunizations, placing them at a higher risk for preventable infections and long-term illness. The children we serve have less access to a continuous source of medical and dental care and tend to miss more school because of illness, putting them further behind their more advantaged peers in terms of educational achievement. We have the unique opportunity to address these types of health and educational disparities for our Head Start and Early Head Start families, and we offer a full range of age appropriate screenings and assessments for each child while highlighting milestone achievements.

The YCOE Head Start/Early Head Start program strives to meet the dietary needs of enrolled children. Nutrition Services continues to be actively involved in a comprehensive and collaborative program to increase the health and wellness of the children, families and staff. Our daily menus follow USDA guidelines to ensure well-balanced, nutritious meals are served. It is important that children learn to eat a variety of foods as a part of a balanced diet. Classroom nutrition activities and the UC Davis Nutrition boxes support the classroom in nutrition education, and we provide growth assessments and ongoing monitoring to ensure the best possible health outcomes for the children in our program.

Our classroom curriculum also models a healthy lifestyle by promoting physical fitness activities for children throughout the day. Nutrition Consulting Services completes a referral and follow up through programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) to ensure the nutrition needs of participating children are met.

Finally, the YCOE Early Childhood Education Program’s Lincoln and Charter site has been a part of a garden project lead by Yolo Farm to Fork. During the 2016-2017 program year, the garden project offered children and families activities around building, growing, harvesting and preparing healthy foods from the garden, including edible flowers!

Professional Development

The YCOE Head Start/Early Head Start Program staff participates in ongoing professional development and coaching as outlined by an organizational timeline and action plan. This Professional Development includes:

- CDE Preschool Foundations and Early Head Start / Head Start Framework
- Effective research-based instructional strategies for English Learners
- Professional Learning Communities/Coaching Strategies and Assessment and Outcomes of children’s progress

With funding from the California Department of Education, the ECE Program is pleased to offer the QRIS (Quality Rating Improvement System) Coaching support for teaching staff. Coaching allows teachers to review their progress on classroom environment assessments, CLASS assessments and Child Outcomes and build a Professional Development plan individualized for their specific group of children. The teaching team is assigned a coach, who visits the teacher bi-monthly. Together the teaching team and coach determine goals that support both teaching staff and children in the classroom.

"The YCOE program and children hold a special place in my heart. The support from coworkers and supervisors is amazing. The reason I love working for YCOE is they are upfront, reliable, and fair. Their support is great!"
- Season Turner, Head Start Teacher
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