



# HEAD START HAPPENINGS NEWSLETTER

WEST CENTRAL COMMUNITY ACTION

JANUARY 2025



## A word for the Director

Happy New Year Head Start! I can't believe we are already to January! I hope you all had an enjoyable holiday and maybe some rest and relaxation before we kick off the second half of the 2024-2025 school year!

In December, our Leadership Team conducted another data review. Here are a few of the key points to share from that:

- **Ages & Stages (ASQ's, ASQ:SE's):** The team noted there were quite a few screenings that we are missing or that missed the 45 day deadline. The team discussed this could be due to the change in the system to the online ASQ, however, we need to have more stringent monitoring and follow up to ensure teachers are completing these at the home visits and follow up with the parent when they are not complete. Ages and Stages are one of the screenings counted on the Program Information Report (PIR) that is reported to Congress, so it is essential that these screenings are being completed as required. As an action step the education and support services teams will work together to update ASQ procedures and create a monitoring plan for these screenings moving forward.
- **Fall School Readiness Goals (GOLD):** The team discussed that we feel the data truly is representing what we are seeing in classrooms which is validating that the data is being completed and entered accurately. Way to go education staff! One of the biggest take-aways/concerns the team discussed was that 25% of children enrolled are not speaking at their developmentally appropriate milestones, this could have major implications as to some of the behaviors we are seeing. Language continues to be a concerning trend, the team discussed how we could get information and strategies to families to work on this at home as well. A few of the action steps are: monitoring book conversations to ensure language is modeled and read alouds are well planned out and sharing information with staff and families in areas that children are lowest.
- **Parent Meeting Attendance:** Parent meeting attendance is down from last fall's data. The team discussed needing to utilize a report to capture the data by percent enrolled, not just number. The team discussed other trends that were noted, one being that teaching staff are not as involved with planning due to lack of time and this could be a contributing factor to attendance. Team discussed potential ways to fix this as an action step, also procedures will be reviewed.
- **Home Visits & Socialization Attendance:** This was the first time being able to review this data due to updates the program made to Child Plus. The team discussed a few things such as; needing to review the procedure for consistent family cancellations, it was good to see so few staff cancellations, and the team wants to find a report for socialization attendance by percentage.
- **Fall Staff Survey:** Summary will be sent out very soon, thanks to all who completed!
- **Family Outcomes & Family Goals (Needs Assessments):** Completion data is looking much better, we are also seeing less declination, which is great! Way to go family services team! A few areas of concern with our families are engaging in Head Start, Employment, and income. Team will continue to monitor goals and growth.

Lastly, as we kick-off this new calendar year, I think it is also important to take time to reflect on the past year. This past year has brought many triumphs and tribulations (as most years

do©) but reflecting back I am grateful for each of you and the team we have here at WCCA Head Start. I appreciate your continued support and passion for this program. I look forward to seeing what 2024 brings and I hope to see you all soon in the New Year!

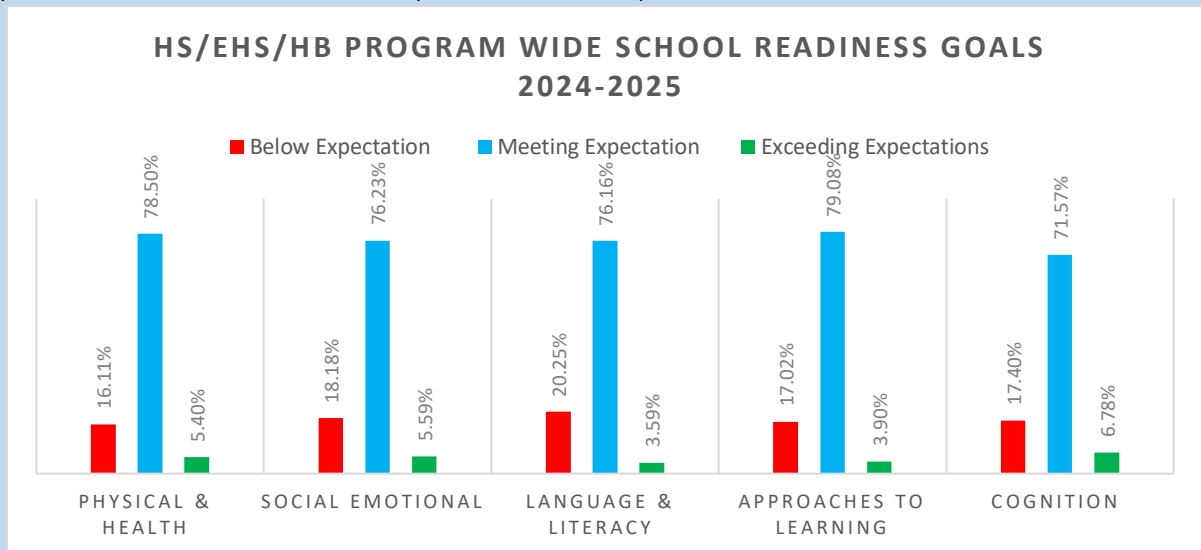


Danni Segebart, Head Start Director

## **Education News...**

It is hard to believe that another year has passed already! Following the holiday, I hope all of you enjoyed many gatherings with family and friends. I hope this filled your buckets up to keep you energized and ready to finish the 24-25 school year strong©

Last month, I informed you that I would share our FALL Teaching Strategies GOLD checkpoint base line data. The leadership team reviewed the Head Start Program Wide School Readiness Data on 12-17-24. The education team and the instructional coach will be working together to try and come up with the some targeted trainings to assist EHS and SH teachers in building skills in all areas of development. Please reach out to me, your ESC, or Amy and let us know if there are specific objectives and dimensions you would like more trainings on. I just want to say thank you to all of you for all your hard work. I know it can be challenging to get through the day sometimes, but the difference you make is so impactful.



I want to remind everyone of the importance of frequent handwashing, sanitizing, and disinfecting. While the holidays are also a great time to rest and reset; it also brings with it lots of sickness as we come together to celebrate. Handwashing, sanitizing, and disinfecting are our best tools of defense to keep staff, families, and children safe and healthy going into the New Year. Please do your part and take care of yourselves and others.

Furthermore, we have been a bit spoiled with the winter weather so far this year, but I just want to remind you to remind families of our protocols for school closures and delays due to weather conditions.



Jennifer Duff, Education Manager

## **From the Nurse's Desk...**

### **What happens at an annual physical?**

From Time article 10/31/24

The visit for an annual physical, which takes about 30 minutes, typically includes a blood draw, physical examination by your physician, an evaluation of your vital signs such as blood pressure and weight, and a review of your medical history and medications. Your doctor may also conduct age-appropriate screening tests for certain cancers and administer vaccines as necessary, as well as administer mental-health questionnaires—and, if necessary, provide you with resources such as therapy referrals or medications to treat anxiety or depression. You'll also have the chance to ask your doctor any questions you may have regarding your health.

A physical isn't only about unearthing new problems. Rather, annual physicals are an important time to discuss preventive health: what you can do to stay healthy based on your individual risk factors and family history, says Dr. Heather Viola, an assistant professor of medicine and primary care physician at Mount Sinai Doctors-Ansonia in New York City. "By regularly monitoring your health, your doctor can identify and address any changes in your health and take steps to prevent chronic illnesses from developing or worsening," she says.

"I generally recommend everyone meet with their doctor once a year for a well visit," Viola says. "You can talk to your doctor about how often they should see you. For most adults, it's once a year.

Next month: How to prepare for a physical

Dianne Blum, Health & Wellness Coordinator

Newsletter  
Hidden Trivia:  
In what county  
did WCCA  
Head Start  
begin in? Email  
Danni with  
your answer!

## **From your Conscious Discipline Team**

### **Noticing:**

First, what is noticing? The skill of noticing is foundational to the successful implementation of Conscious Discipline. It helps us be present and build relationships as we encourage helpfulness in our students and create a School Family. Your job description as the Safekeeper promises children that you will keep them safe, and they have a responsibility to help keep it safe. We must notice their helpfulness in order to encourage them be successful at this job.

There are four steps that will help you successfully notice the helpfulness of children without judgment:

1. Start by using the child's name or the pronoun "you."
2. Next, describe in detail what the child did that was helpful.
3. Help the child understand how that behavior helped someone else or the entire class.
4. Finally, end the description with a tag such as "that was helpful" or "that was thoughtful."

Here is an example of the noticing language: "You scooted over, so Jon would have more space in the circle. That was helpful!"

Your Conscious Discipline Team

## **A word from your Wellness Team...**

### **Why Mental Health Burnout Prevention in The Workplace is Important**

Mental health burnout is more than just a feeling. It can have serious consequences for the individual experiencing it as well as their colleagues and employers. Preventing employee burnout is essential to maintain a productive and supportive workplace.

### **Practical Tips To Prevent Mental Health Burnout at Work**

#### **1. Prioritize Rest and Self Care**

Taking the time to dedicate to proper rest and self-care is incredibly important when it comes to preventing mental health burnout in the workplace. Allowing yourself a break and time to relax after work or taking a regular day off each month to relax and rejuvenate can help to prevent burnout. Taking part in activities such as yoga, time spent outside, or reading can help relax and refocus your mind.

#### **2. Take Breaks Throughout the Day**

If a day off is not an option, breaking up tasks throughout the day with breaks in between can be incredibly beneficial. Taking just ten minutes away from a task can help to reset your brain and clarity. You can do this by taking a short walk, reading for a few minutes, working on a hobby, or meditating.

#### **3. Use Vacation Time**

Allowing yourself time away from the office with a vacation can do wonders for your mental health. Even just a few days away from the office can help to improve productivity and creativity when returning. Vacation days are meant to be used. Use them!

#### **4. Set Boundaries and Stick to Them**

Establishing boundaries with colleagues and superiors to know when you need to pull back and take a break is very important. This process can look like simply setting reminders to take breaks, saying no to additional tasks you don't have time for or you feel like you aren't a good fit for, and/or only communicating during work hours. It is important to stay firm with your boundaries and make sure not to compromise when it comes to taking care of your mental health.

#### **5. Have a Hobby**

Having a hobby can be a great way to prevent mental health burnout in the workplace. Focusing on and enjoying something outside of work can help clear your mind and boost your energy. Whether it's starting a creative project, learning a new craft, or joining a sports team, having something to look forward to outside the office can be very beneficial.

Having a hobby may help improve overall well-being, which in turn can prevent mental exhaustion and burnout. Taking breaks during the workday to practice your hobby can help you stay energized and motivated when taking on workplace challenges.

#### **6. Eat a Balanced Diet and Exercise Regularly**

Putting your physical health first is essential to take care of your mental health. Eating a healthy, balanced diet helps keep your brain clear, as does 30 minutes a day of physical activity. Taking care of the body is a crucial part of taking care of the mind.

#### **7. Combat Negative Thinking**

Negative thoughts have the power to keep us stuck and increase stress levels. Engage in relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, visualization, and journaling to manage negative emotions and thoughts. Focusing on the positive can help counteract stress.

#### **8. Break Large Tasks Into Smaller Steps**

Breaking down large tasks into small, manageable to-dos can reduce overwhelm, leaving one feeling accomplished and less stressed. Create a timeline with goals and objectives and chip away at these tasks one small step at a time.

#### **9. Ask for Help**

Asking for help if feeling overwhelmed can lead to increased productivity and decreased stress. Lean on coworkers or supervisors for support. Reaching out for help can be the

perfect jumpstart to eliminating stress and becoming more productive.

When it comes to mental health burnout in the workplace, prevention is key. By following simple tips such as prioritizing rest and self-care, setting boundaries and taking breaks, combatting negative thinking, and breaking large tasks into smaller steps, we can prevent the burden of mental health burnout. Encourage your coworkers to take these steps to prevent mental health burnout and create a happier and healthier work environment for all.

Ms Sophia in Harlan Head Start won Winnie the Wellness Walrus. Thank you for being a model of wellness! Where will Winnie go next?



Your Wellness Team



### Staff Shout-out's



I would like to shout out to **Andrea Weston, Barbara Barrale, Laura Bowen, and Penny Schuessler**. It has been a great first half of the school year and I am so thankful to have them as part of the Mills County HS team. Andrea has been so helpful as our sub and riding the bus with the kids each day and fostering a great learning experience for them. Barb always has yummy food, Penny has been so helpful with providing me guidance in the classroom and supporting our kids. And Laura is so great with the families and being so passionate about serving the community and helping the families. I truly can't wait to see what the new year brings for our families here at Mills County.

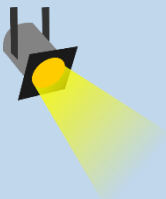
Huge shout-out to our support services team, **Jill Willenborg and Jenny Armstrong**! It has been a busy year with a large number of disability and behavior open concerns, but they both continue to run their tails off to help support the classrooms, students, and families! Thank you Jill and Jenny, you are rock stars!

**Tracy Reed:** Tracy shows up each and every day with a positive, can do attitude! She gives clear and concise instructions and is sure to add humor to the day. She shares her thoughts and ideas and gives constructive feedback to her staff and those around her. We are lucky to have her on our team! Thank you so much Tracy.

**Jill Willenborg:** Jill gives her whole heart to the program and does her very best to advocate for our children and families each and every day. She jumps with both feet into challenges that others would rather not talk about or handle. Thank you Jill for everything that you do 😊

I want to give a huge shout out to **Laura Bowen**. She has worked so hard to build up the Mills County Head Start classroom and continues to build a strong waitlist. She has done a wonderful job of supporting the families that are currently in our program and advocating to ensure that these families get the most out of our program. Laura, you are an essential asset to this program. Thank you for all you do!

We love seeing all the wonderful shout-out's and positive things happening in the program. If you have a shout-out you want to give in the next newsletter, send to [dsegebart@westcca.org](mailto:dsegebart@westcca.org).



## **New Employee Spotlight**



Denise Bicket joined the WCCA Head Start team as the new Assistant Teacher for Council Bluffs Head Start. "Hello, my name is Denise, I go by Denise or Dee. I have a BS degree in Assct. Management and have worked with children for 26+ years. Ten+ years in pre-k and many years with infants and toddlers. I have two adult children, both with degrees of their own. My youngest is autistic and stills lives at home. I'm 60 years old and doing all I can to keep up with the young! Looking forward to meeting and getting to know all of you and the families! Please stop me anytime to ask questions, I love to hear your news!" Welcome to the team Dee!

Jennifer Orr was hired as our new food service for Council Bluffs 1 and 2 Head Start. "Hi there! My name is Jennifer Orr and I am the new food service person for Council Bluffs Head Start. My son Benny actually attends Early Head Start and that is how I heard about this job. When I am not chasing my two sons, Henry (6) and Benny(2), around you will find my nose in a book. My previous work history is being a special education para at the k-6 level so very excited to be getting back into working with kiddos!" We are excited to have you and welcome Jennifer!



### Work Anniversaries

Linda Morris, Atlantic Food Service: 5 years

Amber Rocha, Council Bluffs EHS Teacher: 4 years

Keisha Carlson, Harlan EHS Teacher: 2 years

Nicole Barnhouse, Denison 2 Assistant Teacher: 1 year

Suzanne Lyons, Home Based Teacher: 1 year

Jennifer Rodriguez, Red Oak EHS Teacher: 1 year



**Thank you for all your hard work and dedication over the years!**

## Head Start Happenings.....





Mills County Head Start used coffee filters to make snowflakes!



Do you know Chef Combo? Right: Harlan Head Start uses a classroom helper to tell their peers what's for lunch!

Right: Adding a little yoga to music and movement time is very beneficial.



In-kind alert idea! Ms. Emily is a children's librarian who comes from the Harlan Public library every month to read to the Harlan Head Start classroom. This is a great way to collect in kind from professionals in our community.

Fun Fact: Emily is a part of our Head Start Policy Council!

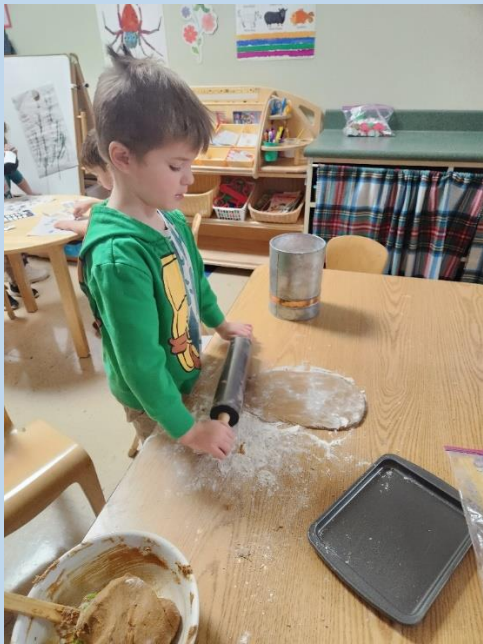
Red Oak EHS is feeling festive!



# Red Oak EHS's Friday Food Activities



Mapleton ended their bread study learning about gingerbread. We made gingerbread men at center time, tasted different types of gingerbread foods and made our own gingerbread men. Two of our friends made the North Pole with cups and blocks in the block area.



Mapleton Head Start visited the bank in Mapleton to hang ornaments on their tree. We got a short tour of the bank and they gave each child a piggy bank to save our coins.

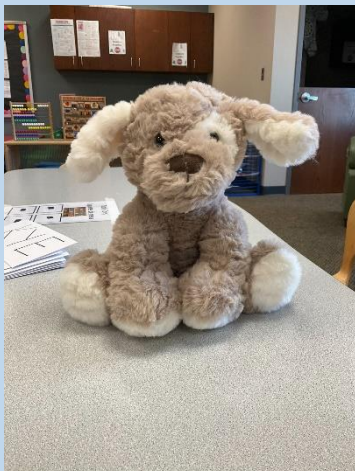
Red Oak: Each year, the employees at Parker Hannibal help families during Christmas; this year they purchased gifts for 40 children (EHS classroom, Home Based, Head Start Classroom, and the school partnership classroom). The classroom teachers and children made them "Thank you cards" and Kyanna delivered. They are trying to gather receipts from everyone and is going to try to get Corporate to match the total, then will donate the money to the Red Oak program. :)

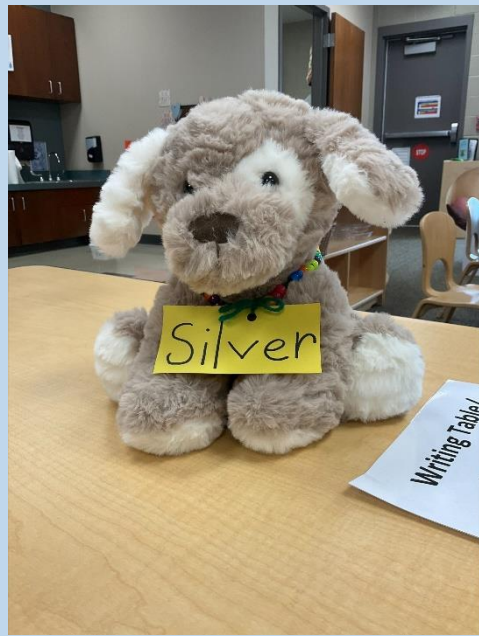


### A Paw-sitive Month at Mills County Headstart!

They wrapped up our "Paws-itive Awesome Pet Study," and it was a *tail* of a time! They kicked things off by learning how to care for our class pet, Silver the dog. Silver may not be able to talk, but he sure was a "bark" star in the classroom! The kids learned all about feeding, grooming, and the importance of daily exercise to keep Silver *paws-itive* happy and healthy.

But that's not all—each child got to help make Silver a brand new collar! They talked about what a collar is, and how it helps keep our furry friends safe while looking stylish at the same time. Silver's *collar-ific* new look is definitely fetching! By the end of the study, our little learners were *leash-ed* to the idea that pets need love and care just like us. We're so proud of their *paws-itive* progress! Silver may be the *top dog* of the class, but we think the real winners are our amazing students who've learned what it means to be kind and responsible pet owners.





Harlan EHS1 made some fun keepsakes for their parents.

Mapleton Head Start's winter program.



## Events/ Dates to Remember

January 1<sup>st</sup>: Holiday  
January 3<sup>rd</sup>: All staff professional development day  
January 8<sup>th</sup>: Early Dismissal  
January 15<sup>th</sup>: Early Dismissal  
January 20<sup>th</sup>: Holiday  
January 22<sup>nd</sup>: Early Dismissal  
January 29<sup>th</sup>: Early Dismissal

## Staff Birthdays...

January 2<sup>nd</sup>- Jennifer Duff (Admin)  
January 7<sup>th</sup>- Keisha Carlson (Harlan)  
January 7<sup>th</sup>- Heidi Millet (Council Bluffs)  
January 8<sup>th</sup>- Katie Cannon (Atlantic)



\*\*If you notice that I have missed you, or someone else's birthday, please let me know. That means it is not in our Child Plus system correctly. Thanks for your help!

## Open Positions:

Red Oak Early Head Start Teacher

Council Bluffs Assistant Teacher

Assistant Teacher Floater (2 positions 1 for CB, 1 for Harlan) NEW positions!!

Missouri Valley Assistant Teacher

Missouri Valley Classroom Aide

Family Advocate- Harlan

Family Advocate- Council Bluffs

Health and Nutrition Specialist

Behavior Support Specialist

Education Support Coordinator (Council Bluffs & Missouri Valley)

**\*\*IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE INTERESTED, ENCOURAGE THEM TO APPLY AT  
[HTTPS://WWW.WESTCENTRALCA.ORG/CAREERS](https://www.westcentralca.org/careers)**