



**Stepping Stone Academy**  
of South Hudson

**Head Start**

Administrative Offices  
555 Kennedy Blvd., Bayonne, NJ

**Center I**  
**21 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Center II**  
**557 Kennedy Blvd.**

**Center III**  
**7 West 9<sup>th</sup> Street**

*High Quality Preschool Education Serving the Bayonne Community Since 1965*

---

# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

## **Table of Contents**

INTRODUCTION and MISSION	3
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM	4
Knowledge and Skills Domains	5
Domain Elements	5
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION	5
STAFF TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS	6
INDIVIDUALIZATION	7
FY 2023 ENROLLMENT FACTS and ENROLLMENT STATISTICS	8
FY 2023 Health Insurance Indicators	9
FY 2023 Health Services Performance Indicators	9
FY 2023 Disabilities Screening and Assessment	9
GOVERNANCE and MANAGEMENT	10
FINANCIAL AUDIT	10
FY 2023 Budgetary Expenditures	11
FUNDING SOURCES and Proposed FY 2024 Budget	12
FINANCIAL OTHER (SCHOOL BUS & HOLY FAMILY)	13
SPECIAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN	13
Preschool Disabilities Services	13
Speech and Language Services for Head Start Children	14
Disabilities Services	14
PREPARING CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN	14
Kindergarten Readiness	15
TRANSITION	16
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES	17
ON-SITE MONITORING REVIEW	18

# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

## **Introduction**

*Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation Head Start strives to bring about a greater degree of social competence in children of income eligible families. To accomplish this, a comprehensive developmental program has been designed to meet the needs of children, including disability, education, health, nutrition, social services, and parent engagement. The program strives to establish a pattern of success within each child that will promote a feeling of confidence in future endeavors. Experiences for the child and family help to foster a sense of dignity and self-worth that promote active involvement in family and community for the overall improvement of the family's living standards. The program supports and strengthens the parent-child relationships and engages families around children's learning and development.*

## **Mission Statement**

*The program's overall mission is to promote school readiness of children ages 3 to 5 from income eligible families and children with special needs from Bayonne, N.J. by supporting their development in a comprehensive way. Children's readiness for school and beyond is fostered through individualized learning experiences. Its economic development, educational and human services programs shall be directed towards that goal.*

*It believes that every person has the ability to enhance their being if their individual needs are met. Therefore, it will engage parents in setting priorities to set goals by providing resources and opportunities for social,*

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

*intellectual and physical growth for both the family and child. Bayonne Head Start is responsive to the ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage of each child and family.*

### **Description of the Program**

The program has provided high quality preschool and early childhood educational services to children and families in Bayonne, New Jersey for 58 years. We offer a full-day program to children in three centers located in the City of Bayonne. Our focus is to provide children with the best possible services and support to promote their cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional, health, nutrition, and developmental needs so that they can reach their highest potential to be successful in life.

The program operates from 8:30 am until 2:30 pm. Transportation services are available to a limited number of students who do not live within walking distance to any of the three centers. All children receive a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and snack during the day.

The curriculum and child development services are based on the Head Start Child Development Early Learning Framework. This framework comprises two areas which early childhood education experts believe are critical for the developmental needs of children ages three to five:

### **Knowledge and Skills Domains**

- Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Logic and Reasoning, Social Studies, Language Development, Creative Development, Physical Development and Health, and English Language Development

### **Domain Elements**

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

- Early Writing, Book Appreciation, Phonological Awareness, Number Concepts, Relationships, Quantities, Geometry, Measurement, Patterns, Scientific Skills, Methods, Reasoning and Problem-Solving, Symbolic Representation, History, People and the Environment, Community and Family, Receptive and Expressive Language, Music, Art and Drama, Gross Motor and Fine Motor Skills, Health Knowledge, and Healthy Lifestyle Practices

### Early Childhood Education

- ◆ We use the **High Scope Curriculum** which incorporates core outcomes and benchmarks of the *New Jersey State Department of Education Preschool Teaching & Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality* - [www.nj.gov/education/ece/guide/standards.gov](http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/guide/standards.gov)
- ◆ All children receive behavioral, health, mental health, developmental and disabilities screenings and assessments *within 45 days of enrollment in Bayonne Head Start*. Formal Developmental Screening is performed annually using the Brigance Preschool Screen – [www.curriculumassociates.com](http://www.curriculumassociates.com)
- ◆ Tracking and assessment of learning and development is performed three times annually with each child using the **Online Classroom Observation Record (COR Advantage)**
- ◆ Parent/Teacher conferences are held two times a year for each child
- ◆ Portfolios are developed for each child showing their work throughout the year

### STAFF TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS

The teachers may possess a combination of the following: Bachelor's Degree, the

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Bachelor's Degree with P-3 certification and the Associate's Degree in Early Childhood. Teacher assistants have met professional standards by possessing a CDA Credential, Associate's Degree or Bachelor's Degree in early childhood education.

The Education, Mental Health /Disabilities and Social Service Managers possess MA Degrees in their field of expertise. The Health and Nutrition Manager has an L.P.N. Managers focus on key service areas and work as a team to integrate learning, development and inclusion in: Education, Disabilities, Health, Mental Health, Family and Community Partnerships.

Teachers and managers are supported by the following professional consultants and practitioners:

- Mental Health Consultant
- Nutrition Consultant
- Education Consultant
- Coaching Consultant
- Learning consultants through High Scope, State of NJ Head Start Collaboration Office, and the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialists from the Department of Health and Human Services / Administration for Children and Families Region II Head Start
- Best Practices in early childhood education are supported at Bayonne Head Start by research and practice from leading scholars and practitioners in the field of early childhood education

### **Individualization to Support School Readiness**

The program collaborates with the family, individualizing to meet each child's unique characteristics and strengths.

Individualization for all children is integral to the program and children's success at being ready for kindergarten. Relationships with parents allow us to tailor the program to each individual child. Our education, health, mental health, disabilities, nutrition, and family and community partnership services are supportive of

# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

children’s individual needs, abilities and learning styles.

The program focuses on:

- Allowing children to learn at their own pace by interacting with the environment, through experimentation.
- Engaging activities which focus on cognitive and language development with attention to English language learners, children’s unique attributes and strengths, and children with special needs
- Children’s communication, literacy, mathematics, reasoning, and school readiness skills through exploration in the environment and engagement in activities with classmates, teachers, staff, and parents
- Working with children at their own pace to develop skills which will enhance cognitive development
- Working in partnership with parents to support children’s individual needs through regular meetings, conferences, updates, and providing suggestions for activities that can be utilized at home

## **FY 2022-2023 Enrollment Facts**

Funded Enrollment	156
Cumulative Enrollment	104
Number of Children Enrolled	104
Head Start total number of families served	102
Number of Children served as a percentage of all income eligible children in the Bayonne Community	90%
Monthly enrollment	100%

## **FY 2022-2023 Health Insurance Indicators**

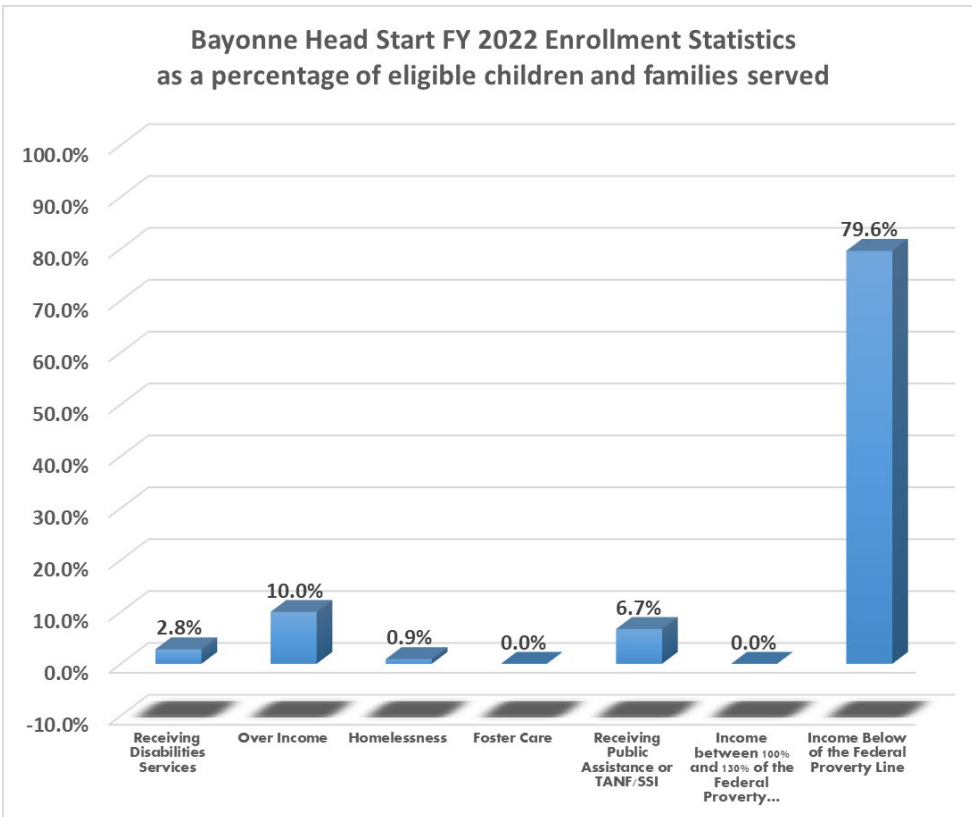
## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Children with health insurance that includes those enrolled in Medicaid/or CHIP 104

Children enrolled in Medicaid and /or CHIP 98

Children enrolled in state-only funded Insurance or private insurance 6

Children with no health insurance 0



### FY 2022-2023 Health Services Performance Indicators

Number of children up to date on preventative health care 104

Number of children up to date or have received all possible immunizations 101

Number of children up to date on professional dental exams or age-appropriate preventive or primary oral health care 104



# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Number of children with continuous, accessible dental care 104

Number of children who meet the state’s guidelines for an exemption from immunizations 3

## FY 2022-2023 Disabilities Screening and Assessment

Number of newly enrolled children who completed developmental, sensory, and behavioral screenings 75

Number of children who completed developmental, sensory, and behavioral screenings and were identified as needing follow-up assessment or formal evaluation to determine if they have a disability 17

Number of children who were determined to be eligible to receive special education and related services and have received services 7

## GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT

### SHARED GOVERNANCE

#### Board of Trustees

Community Representatives  
Parent Representatives

#### Policy Council

51% Parent representatives of currently enrolled children

### CEO/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Samantha Howard

#### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Michelle E. Byrd  
**Chairperson**

Denise Durans  
**Vice Chairperson**

Shaniqua Borders  
**Secretary**

Chester Banks  
**Treasurer**

#### REPRESENTATIVES

Kenneth Poesl  
Barbara Pelliccio  
Thomas Coughlin  
Henry Perez

#### POLICY COUNCIL

Marco Coeho  
**President**

Nalleli Willmore  
**Vice-President**

Jiamin Xu  
**Secretary**

Pete Amadeo

**Community Representative**

# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

## Head Start Program Managers

<b>Director</b> Rosemary Simnowitz	<b>FCP COORDINATOR</b> Diane Duarte	<b>CFO</b> Anthony Segarra
<b>Health Manager</b> Joyline Williams	<b>Mental Health Manager/Dis. Manager</b> Lourdes Nunez	<b>Education/Literacy Manager</b> Gail Lovell

## Financial Audit

*Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation's* annual independent audited financial statements for the year ended January 31, 2023, were issued by the HBK CPAs & Consultants, PC, CPAs and Consultants on June 21, 2023. An unqualified opinion was issued on the financial statements and no internal control or compliance findings were reported for the Head Start program.

## Monitoring Reviews

From March 27, 2023 to March 29, 2023 the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus One Monitoring Review. Based on the information gathered during the review, the program is fully compliant with all of the Head Start Performance Standards, laws, regulations, and policy requirements.

From October 1, 2018 to October 4, 2018 the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Two "Fiscal" monitoring review. Based on the information gathered during the review, the program is fully compliant with all of the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards, laws, regulations and policy requirements.

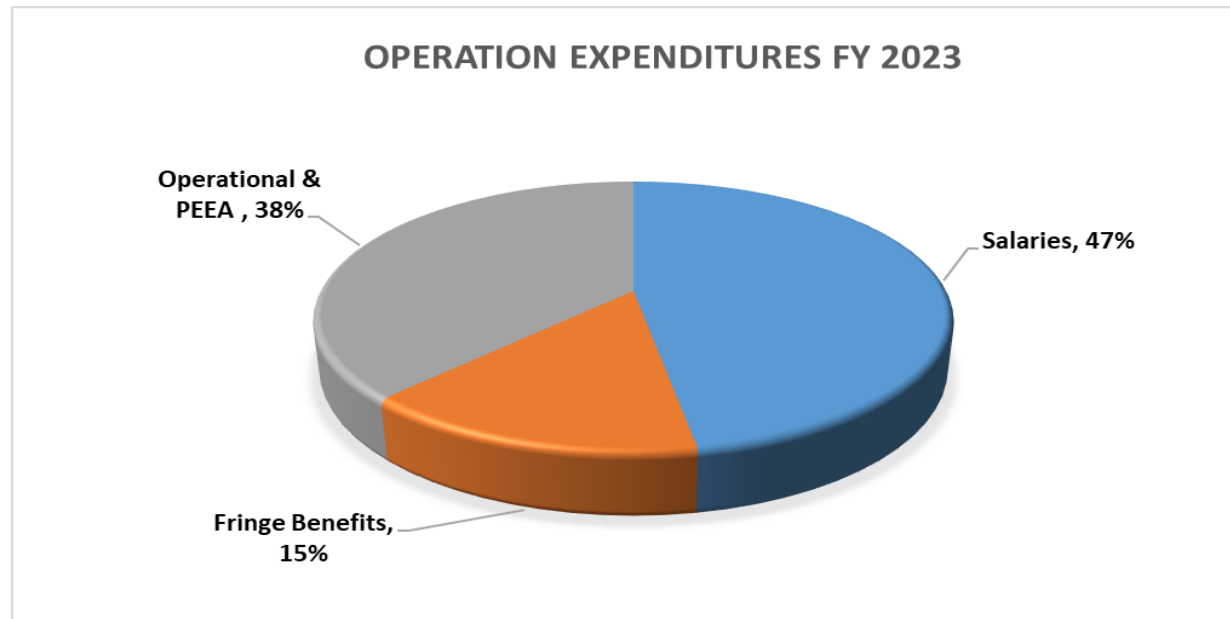
The Head Start supports staff efforts through salaries that are comparable to similar positions in the community: teaching staff, managing staff including specialists and directors, family advocates, and other support staff. The organizational structure is aligned with goals, as well as being compliant with the Head Start Act and Head Start Performance Standards.

# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

## FY 2023 Budgetary Expenditures (2/1/2022– 1/31/2023)

The program is supported by Federal Funding:

<b>Department of Health &amp; Human Services</b>	
Head Start	1,709,660
American Rescue Plan	120,250
Head Start COVID Funding	27,929
Holy Family Renovation	1,071,847
<b>Dept. of Agriculture - USDA</b>	<b>94,343</b>
<b>Total Federal Funding</b>	<b>3,024,029</b>
<b>In-Kind</b>	<b>428,519</b>
<b>Other Funding Sources:</b>	
Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA), 6M thru HS FY	338,565
CDBG Security Guard Grant (City of Bayonne pass thru)	14,537
Fidelity Grant – Holy Family Renovation	46,354
Community Health Connection – Holy Family Renovation	85,369
NJ Childcare Employee Incentive	51,310
<b>Total Other Funding Sources</b>	<b>536,135</b>
<b>Total Head Start Support (Federal, In-kind, and Other)</b>	<b>3,988,683</b>



## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

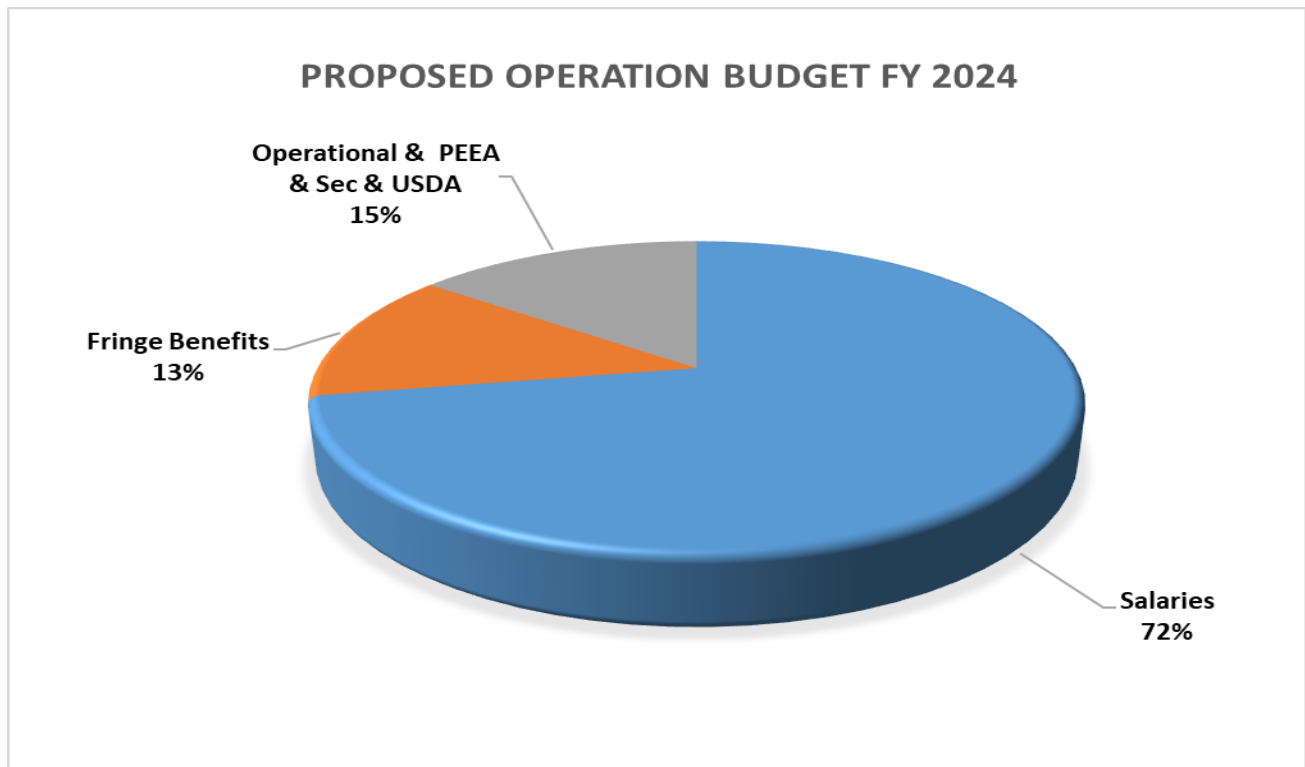
### **FY 2024 Proposed Budget - Head Start Operation only** (2/1/2023–1/31/2024)

Head Start Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, Program Instruction, informed and approved Head Start grantee an increase of cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) of 5.60%, retroactive 2/1/2023 and additional Quality Improvement funds based on the enrollment levels.

On February 4, 2019, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed A-15, which sets New Jersey on the path to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2024. Head Start applied the changes accordingly based on the NJ Law as follows for FY 2021:

- a) July 1, 2019, minimal wages from 8.95 to 10.00.
- b) January 1, 2020, minimal wage from 10.00 to 11.00
- c) January 1, 2021, minimal wage from 11.00 to 12.00
- d) January 1, 2022, minimal wage from 12.00 to 13.00
- e) January 1, 2023, minimal wage from 13.00 to 14.13
- f) January 1, 2024, minimal wage from 14.13 to target goal 15.13

In July 2023, the program renewed the contract with the Bayonne Board of Education for 45 slots shared parity to comply with the New Jersey Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA) to expand and continue to provide exceptional services.



## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

### **NEW SCHOOL BUS – CHEVROLET 2023**

On September 20, 2022, The Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation submitted a budget revision request for the American Rescue Plan, seeking approval to allocate funds for the acquisition of a new 20-seat Type B Wheelchair Lift school bus equipped with the latest model and state-of-the-art features. This initiative aimed to enhance transportation services and support within the City of Bayonne. The Regional Office at Head Start reviewed and approved the budget modification, endorsing the purchase of the specified school bus. Following approval, the bus was promptly built and made available to the Stepping Stone Academy Head Start in March 2023, benefiting children and families within the community.

### **HOLY FAMILY RENOVATION PROJECT - UPDATE**

On August 17, 2022, the Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation successfully completed the first phase of the Holy Family project. A total expenditure of over 2.4 million dollars has been invested in the project, encompassing comprehensive interior gutting and demolition activities within the facility. This extensive renovation initiative included various spaces, such as the gym, classrooms, offices, and common areas. The project also included the remediation of all asbestos, the installation of a brand-new roof throughout the entire facility, and the implementation of a new state-of-the-art HVAC system.

However, in response to the unprecedented inflation experienced between 2022 and 2023, the Agency has submitted a new 1303 facility application to the Head Start regional office. This application seeks additional funding to complete the interior transformation of the school, covering aspects such as new flooring, bathroom fixtures, and renovated walls, to prepare the facility for full occupancy. Ongoing negotiations with the Regional Office are in progress, and the Foundation anticipates finalizing the project to facilitate the relocation of Stepping Stone Academy by September 2025.

**RECAP:** September 2020, the Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation, serving as the umbrella organization for the program, received an award for the Holy Family Major Renovation Project with the aim of consolidating our current Head Start program into a single location.

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Renovations and repairs to the existing school building on the Holy Family Academy grounds will significantly enhance the value provided to the Bayonne community. Over the years, the former school has remained vacant, deteriorating and presenting numerous safety and health concerns. With additional Head Start funding and support from various other sources, BEOF intends to rejuvenate ten classrooms, relocating our current classrooms. This effort will breathe new life into this historic structure, transforming it into a vibrant and integral part of the Bayonne community.

### **Special Services for Children**

- All Children receive development, health, and mental health screenings
- All children identified with issues are referred to the Bayonne Board of Education Child Study Team for developmental and health related disabilities evaluation
- All identified children receive in-class support from the Bayonne Head Start service area:
  - **Mental Health / Disabilities**—Oversees the BBOE Inclusion children as well as the children receiving speech therapy
  - Makes observations, conducts parent/staff meetings and refers children and parents for counseling and support to the Bayonne Mental Health Clinic in Bayonne, N.J.
  - Provides in-class support and modifications as necessary
- Children identified as needing additional classroom support and who are awaiting BOE evaluations are referred to the Jersey City Medical Center's Child & Adolescent Behavioral Health Services or Hackensack University Hospital

### **Preschool Disabilities Services**

The program had one student with an IEP from the Bayonne Board of Education that were enrolled in the 2022-2023 program year.

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

- The program provided facilities, teaching staff, nutrition, health services and classroom equipment. Disabilities services were provided through the Bayonne Board of Education.
- Children were provided speech therapy through the Jersey City Medical Center (JCMC) and Children's Specialized Hospital.

### **Speech and Language Services for Head Start Children:**

- Identified children are referred to the Jersey City Medical Center or Children's Specialized Hospital
- Teaching staff support integrated speech and language development in the curriculum based on a child's individual needs

### **Disabilities Services are an Integral Part of Kindergarten Readiness**

- The program is a key provider of disabilities services to preschool-aged children in Bayonne
- Our early intervention and integrated services model address major developmental delays
- Providing Preschool Disabilities Services for speech and language is valuable because children are better prepared for kindergarten and costs may be reduced to support these children once they enter kindergarten
- Preschool Disabilities Services can positively impact children's success in kindergarten and beyond
- Preschool Disabilities Services for speech and language can mitigate the need for increased and additional services once a child enters kindergarten

### **Preparing Children for Kindergarten**

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Throughout the year children's development is assessed and monitored to ensure success in their cognitive growth. Families are encouraged to participate in trainings, workshops and conferences to maintain a strong partnership between school and home. Various in-house and community services such as intervention for a child are available to better serve our families' needs. Education Curriculum meetings are offered several times a year to assist parents with math and literacy in the home to support school readiness goals.

### **School Readiness**

The program provides a full range of high quality early childhood education services that prepare children to be successful in school:

- Classroom routines (attendance, following schedules, listening)
- Emergent academic skills
- Familiarity with taking standardized testing
- Appropriate social behaviors
- Self- management

The High Scope Curriculum supports children at their developmental level and helps them build upon it in a social setting. Our CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) is used to assess the quality of teacher-child interactions.

COR Advantage is used to track and measure children's progress.

### **COR Advantage Domain Report Period 1 to Period 3:**

<b>COR Domain</b>	<b>Period 1</b>	<b>Period 3</b>
Approaches to Learning	2.47	3.82
Physical Development and Health	3.09	4.29



## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Language, Literacy and Communication	2.60	3.68
Mathematics	2.67	3.80
Social/Emotional	2.69	3.95

### **Transition**

The Bayonne Board of Education offers an onsite workshop for parents on what to expect when their child enters kindergarten. The children and parents prepare an All About Me Booklet to give to their kindergarten teachers on their first day of school. The children practice using trays in the cafeteria as well as how to open drink containers.

### **Family Involvement**

Parents have an opportunity to participate in trainings that included child growth and development, child abuse, lead poisoning and poison control, emergency preparedness, and clean air. Parents also had ample opportunities to volunteer to assist teachers in the classroom.

Additional family involvement activities included:

- ◆ Parent Committee
- ◆ Policy Council
- ◆ Classroom Workshops
- ◆ Parent Orientation Meeting
- ◆ Education Curriculum Meetings
- ◆ Mental Health / Disabilities Group Meetings
- ◆ Health Advisory Committee Meetings
- ◆ Fatherhood Activities

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

- ◆ Fathers Bring Your Child to School Day
- ◆ Multi-cultural Activities in the Classroom
- ◆ Reading in the Classroom on Dr. Seuss Day
- ◆ Parent Teacher Conferences
- ◆ Family Fun Day
- ◆ Self- Assessment

### **New Head Start 5 Year Grant**

The program received notification and was awarded year 3 of the 5-year continuation grant from 2/1/2023 - 1/31/2024.

### **Monitoring Reviews**

From March 27, 2023 to March 29, 2023 the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus One Monitoring Review. Based on the information gathered during the review, the program is fully compliant with all of the Head Start Performance Standards, laws, regulations, and policy requirements.

From October 1, 2018 to October 4, 2018 the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Two “Program” monitoring review. Based on the information gathered during the review, the program is fully compliant with all of the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards, laws, regulations and policy requirements.

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

Head Start agencies have a five-year grant with the Administration of Children and Families. Throughout the five-year grant process an agency can receive an on-site monitoring review in year two or year three of the five-year grant.