

Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

**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*

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# Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

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## **Introduction**

*Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation Head Start strives to bring about a*

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*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 is believed 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, 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.*

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## **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 60 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**

- Early Writing, Book Appreciation, Phonological Awareness, Number Concepts, Relationships, Quantities, Geometry, Measurement, Patterns, Scientific Skills, Methods, Reasoning and Problem-Solving,

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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 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 degree or bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

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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 children's individual needs, abilities and learning styles.

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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 2024-2025 Enrollment Facts**

Funded Enrollment	156
Cumulative Enrollment	137
Number of Children Enrolled	137
Head Start total number of families served	133
Number of Children served as a percentage of all income eligible children in the Bayonne Community	90%
Monthly enrollment	100%

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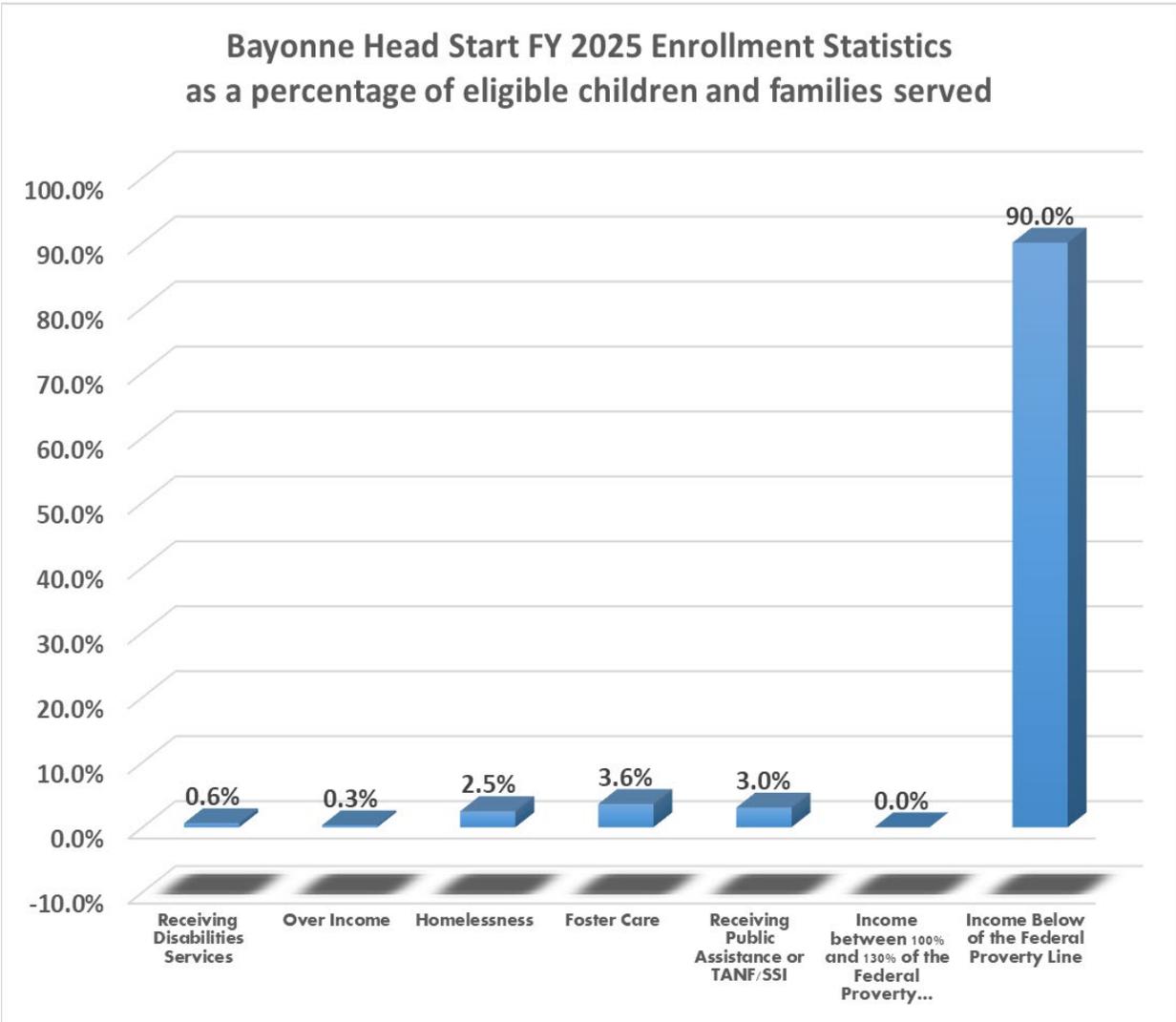
## FY 2024-2025 Health Insurance Indicators

Children with health insurance that includes those enrolled in Medicaid/or CHIP 137

Children enrolled in Medicaid and /or CHIP 90

Children enrolled in state-only funded Insurance or private insurance 47

Children with no health insurance 0



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## FY 2024-2025 Health Services Performance Indicators

Number of children up to date on preventative health care	137
Number of children up to date or have received all possible immunizations	129
Number of children up to date on professional dental exams or age-appropriate preventive or primary oral health care	137
Number of children with continuous, accessible dental care	137
Number of children who meet the state’s guidelines for an exemption from immunizations	8

## FY 2024-2025 Disabilities Screening and Assessment

Number of newly enrolled children who completed developmental, sensory, and behavioral screenings	59
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	59
Number of children who were determined to be eligible to receive special education and related services and have received services	4

## 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

#### REPRESENTATIVES

Kenneth Poesl

#### POLICY COUNCIL

Sally Isaac

## Stepping Stone Academy of South Hudson Head Start

<p><b>Chairperson</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Barbara Pelliccio Thomas Coughlin Henry Perez</p>		<p><b>President</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fazia Jadoon</p>
<p>Denise Durans <b>Vice Chairperson</b></p>		<p><b>Vice-President</b></p>
<p>Jackie Farber <b>Secretary</b></p>		<p>Kenisha Danielle <b>Secretary</b></p>
<p>Chester Banks <b>Treasurer</b></p>		<p>Pete Amadeo</p> <p><b>Community Representative</b></p>

### Head Start Program Managers

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

### Financial Audit

*Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation's* annual independent audited financial statements for the year ended January 31, 2025, were issued by the HBK CPAs & Consultants, PC, CPAs and Consultants on November 12, 2025. 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.

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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.

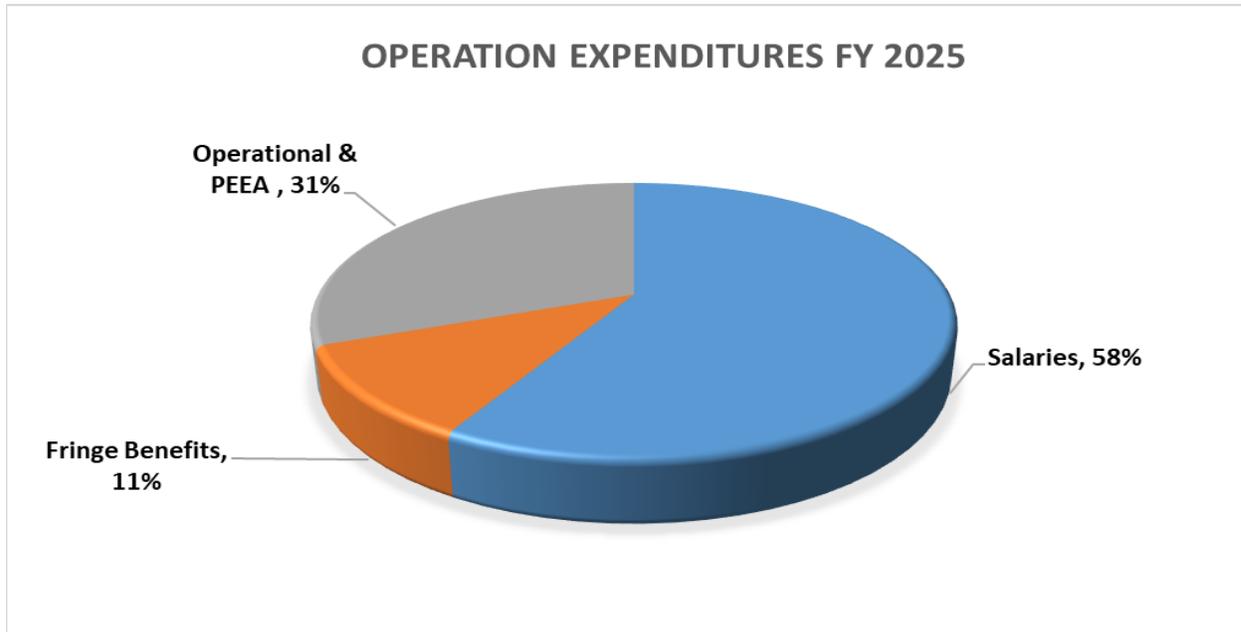
The Head Start supports staff efforts through salaries that are comparable to similar positions in the community: teaching staff, managing staff including specialists and directors, family advocates, and other support staff. The organizational structure is aligned with goals, as well as being compliant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

### **FY 2025 Budgetary Expenditures** (2/1/2024– 1/31/2025)

#### **The program is supported by Federal Funding:**

<b>Department of Health &amp; Human Services</b>	
Head Start	1,951,860
<b>Dept. of Agriculture - USDA</b>	132,246
<b>Total Federal Funding</b>	<b>2,084,106</b>
<b>In-Kind</b>	<b>578,887</b>
<b><u>Other Funding Sources:</u></b>	
Preschool Education Expansion Aid (PEEA), 6M thru HS FY	395,708
CDBG Security Guard Grant (City of Bayonne pass thru)	14,412
<b>Total Other Funding Sources</b>	<b>410,120</b>
<b>Total Head Start Support (Federal and Other Funding)</b>	<b>3,073,113</b>

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### **FY 2026 Proposed Budget - Head Start Operation only** (2/1/2025– 1/31/2026)

Head Start Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026, no Program Instruction were received for cost-of-living adjustment at the Federal level.

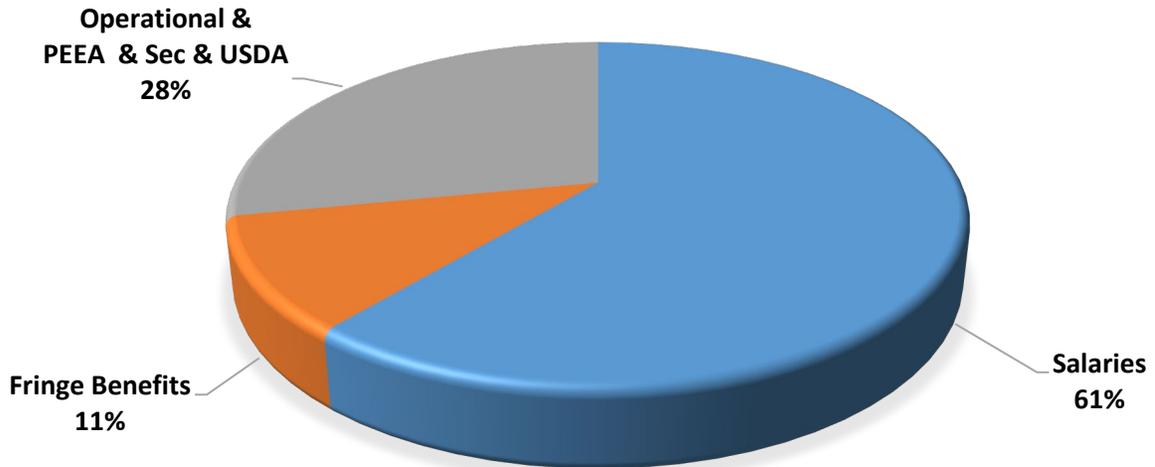
On February 4, 2019, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed A-15, which sets New Jersey on the path to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2024. Head Start applied the changes accordingly based on the NJ Law as follows for FY 2021:

- 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 15.00
- g) January 1, 2025, minimal wage from 15.00 to 15.49
- h) January 1, 2026, minimal wage from 15.49 to 15.92

In July 2024, 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.

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### PROPOSED OPERATION BUDGET FY 2026



### HOLY FAMILY RENOVATION PROJECT

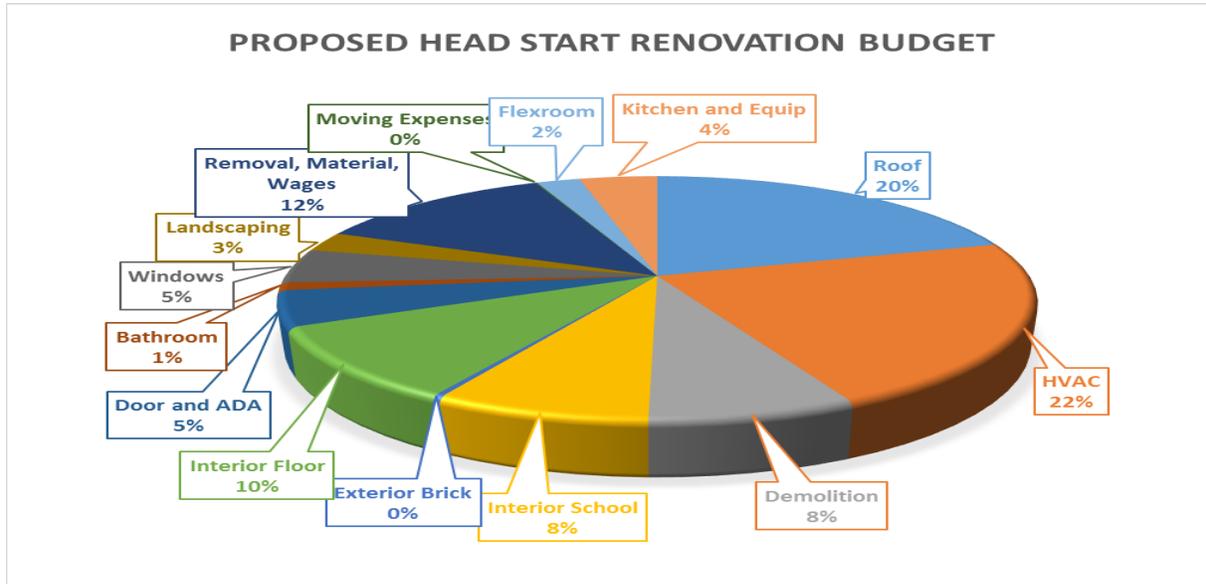
In September 2020, the Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation, the umbrella of the program was awarded for the Holy Family Major renovation project to relocate our current Head Start program into one location.

Renovations and repairs to the existing school building on the Holy Family Academy grounds will add much value to the Bayonne community. For years, the former school has sat vacant, falling into a state of disrepair and posing many safety and health related issues. With additional Head Start funding and other funding sources, BEOF will revitalize ten classrooms to occupy our current classrooms while breathing new life into a wonderful old structure and allowing it to continue as an integral part of the Bayonne community.

In 2021 an unforeseen U.S. demand greatly outstripped supply. Limited supplies became scarce reaching globally 40-65% higher than pre-Covid-19 prices. Labor shortages impacted nationwide. The unprecedented pandemic Covid aftermath

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trigger prices to climb substantially impacted the renovation budget. As a result, On May 15, 2025, the BEOF received the supplement – facilities 1303 award in the amount of 5,766,535 to proceed with the final phase of the construction.



### 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
  - Completes 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

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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 seven students with an IEP from the Bayonne Board of Education that were enrolled in the 2024-2025 program year.

- 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

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- 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**

Throughout the year children's development is assessed and monitored to ensure success in their cognitive growth. Families are encouraged to participate in training, 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.

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

COR Domain	Period 1	Period 3
Approaches to Learning	2.83	4.24
Physical Development and Health	3.58	4.32
Language, Literacy and Communication	2.23	2.93
Mathematics	2.99	4.30
Social/Emotional	2.60	3.30

### **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 include 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

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- ◆ Classroom Workshops
- ◆ Parent Orientation Meeting
- ◆ Education Curriculum Meetings
- ◆ Mental Health / Disabilities Group Meetings
- ◆ Health Advisory Committee Meetings
- ◆ Fatherhood Activities
- ◆ 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 4 of the 5-year continuation grant from 2/1/2024 - 1/31/2025.

### **Monitoring Reviews**

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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 requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards, laws, regulations and policy requirements.

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.