

ERSEA (Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment and Attendance)

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
Website needs to be updated and more accessible to families.	Created a new website with Google Sites in English and Spanish with links to application, forms, calendars, community resources, and parent information that is easy to update, navigate and access. QR code added to all recruitment materials.	Yes

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 90% is the average program attendance in 2024-2025, with a very low occurrence of chronic absenteeism. ● Returning students: 10% in 2024-2025. 27% 3 year old students in 2024-2025 potentially returning next year. ● Selection criteria scorecard accurately represents the families with most need in the county for enrollment priority. ● Head Start slots are at capacity each year. ● Serving children of historically marginalized populations: minority families (30%), families receiving SNAP benefits (34%), single parent households (26%), foster/kinship children (7%), English language learners (11%), and families with children with developmental delays and IEPs (25%). ● Family Services staff participates in 3-4 community wide events for families to participate in, become more involved in their child(ren)'s education, and to promote the Head Start Program and recruit children. Staff also participates in school-wide literacy events, family evenings, and festivals at each school.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen relationship with new WNC Source EHS center. 2. Build relationship with new Miss Tammy's Little Learning Center, the only additional early childhood center in Polk County. 3. Attend training on new performance standards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact ERSEA coordinator and family services coordinator. 2. Contact the director/staff and gather information. 3. Request Ms. Cureton for training 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with coordinators before the opening date in January 2025 2. Set a meeting in January 2025 3. Date for training in Spring 2025

Education and Child Development Services

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
<p>Continue our work towards achieving full curriculum fidelity as our program shifted from using <i>High Scope</i> to <i>Creative Curriculum, 7th Edition</i>, during the 2023-2024 school year.</p>	<p>All Preschool Staff (Teachers, Assistants, Floaters, and Central Office) have received training on the following topics during the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years to achieve curriculum fidelity:</p> <p><i>Introduction to Creative Curriculum</i> (full day, onsite for all staff);</p> <p><i>Implementing Studies to Promote Inquiry-Based Learning Part 1</i> (full day, onsite for all staff);</p> <p><i>Implementing Studies to Promote Inquiry-Based Learning Part 2</i> (full day, onsite for all staff);</p> <p><i>Mathematics Within The Creative Curriculum for Preschool</i> (full day, onsite for all staff);</p> <p><i>Formative Assessment for Young Learners (Teachers only)</i>;</p> <p><i>Language Essential for Teachers of Reading and Spelling training (Teachers only)</i></p> <p><i>100% of Classrooms completed the Creative Curriculum Fidelity Checklist in Fall, 2024—to identify strengths and areas for growth. We will do so again in Spring, 2025, and subsequent school years.</i></p>	<p>Yes—however, we will continue professional development, coaching, and curriculum fidelity tool use during the 2025-2026 school year <u>and following school years</u> as we strengthen our ability to fully implement <i>Creative Curriculum</i> within and across classrooms. Additionally, since curriculum fidelity is a “journey rather than a destination,” our program will always strive for greater curriculum fidelity within and across classrooms.</p>

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 100% of children and families received an initial Parent/Teacher Interaction—where each had the opportunity to visit their classroom and meet prior to the start of school. ● 100% of children (e.g., new children and those without an IEP) received a DIAL-R screening within the 45-day mandated deadline. ● 100% of teachers and assistants achieved their required annual 15 hours of professional development during the first two months of school. ● 100% of professional development opportunities were based on identified programmatic needs and staff growth areas—such as training on the <i>Power of Positive Relationships (Pyramid Model)</i>, <i>Playground Safety</i>, <i>Supervision Best Practices</i>; <i>Best Practices for Preschool Students with Autism</i>; and <i>Setting Up Children for Success: Targeted Social Emotional Supports</i>. ● 100% of teachers, assistants, and floaters have an annual online Prosolutions account to train on topics of interest to them <u>at any time</u>. Teachers also have “The Hub” available online through TSG, as well, for additional training opportunities. ● All staff meetings are focused primarily on professional development opportunities, rather than housekeeping items that can be shared through other means. ● All Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings are more focused on supporting individual child needs (rather than housekeeping items)—with an emphasis on discussing ways to improve practices specifically for children who may need more behavior support, individualized interventions, or differentiated instruction. ● We collaborate extensively with our school system’s Exceptional Children’s program to improve our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and referral process for all preschool children. ● We are using our annual <i>School Readiness Plan</i> and <i>Teaching Strategies Gold</i> data to guide instruction and programmatic decisions; All families are invited to provide

guidance on the curriculum as well as participate on our School Readiness Committee. Fall, Winter, and Spring data is analyzed by our School Readiness Committee and shared with families via English/Spanish newsletters throughout the year.

- 100% of classrooms receive a Fall and Spring CLASS observation—with coaching/mentoring on growth areas as needed for individual classrooms and across our program. For Fall, our program exceeded National Head Start CLASS averages in two domains (Emotional Support and Instructional Support).
- 100% of teachers continue to complete a transition report which is shared with Kindergarten Teachers. This eases each child’s transition from Head Start to their new classroom. Families also have the opportunity to participate in classroom visits and meetings with their child’s receiving teacher and current Pre-K teacher *prior to* moving to Kindergarten.
- 100% of classrooms completed their *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ECERS-R) self-assessment at the start of the school year.
- 100% of classrooms received an *additional* ECERS observation and individual feedback/coaching from the Preschool Education Specialist. Program-wide items identified through observations were aggregated and shared with all classroom staff for continuous improvement.
- 100% of classrooms completed the *Curriculum Fidelity Checklist* for Creative Curriculum in Fall, and will do so again in the Spring. Data gathered from across checklists will be used for continuous improvement purposes.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reaching our program’s CLASS threshold goals which are: Emotional Support (6.25); Classroom Organization (6) and Instructional Support (4). We are also moving from ECERS-R Rating system to ECERS-3. 2. Additional floaters and/or a third person in every classroom are needed at all free-standing sites to continue to support classrooms with growing numbers of children with special needs, as currently 25% of Head Start children have IEPs. As of December, 2024, we have an additional eight Head Start children referred to MTSS for further evaluation. 3. New/updated performance standards training needed in the area of Education and Child Development. 4. Enhance our Preschool-specific substitute teacher orientation—incorporating periodic orientation sessions on required topics (e.g., CPR/First Aid), Education, Supervision, Shaken Baby/Abusive Head Trauma...etc. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to provide professional development and coaching on CLASS—with a specific emphasis on growth areas identified during Fall and Spring observations. Continue to tailor support and growth areas with individual classrooms. Professional Development on ECERS-3 scheduled for August 2025. 2. Continue to seek funding to support the addition of new staff. 3. Submit a Training & Technical Assistance request for training. 4. Offer orientation training for substitutes in Fall, Winter, and Spring; consider adding additional Prosolutions slots for Pre-K substitutes to complete 24 hours of required NC Health and Safety training. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. January 2025-ongoing 2. Winter 2024-ongoing 3. Spring, 2025 4. January 2025-Spring 2026

Health Services

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
Obtaining Lead Level Results	<p>Educating parents and providers on the need for this data.</p> <p>Explaining to providers unless they feel there is a need for a repeat screening the lead level obtained when the child would normally have it completed is sufficient for the data needed. However, if the child has not had it completed requesting they assess the risk and order lead level testing unless they have determined there is no risk and do not feel the need to order testing.</p> <p>Explaining to parents when the child would have normally have had this test completed and finding out which provider they would have been seeing at that point and time, if it was not the provider they are currently seeing.</p> <p>Faxing physicians' offices with signed release of information to obtain lead level results if they were not turned in at time of health assessment or if the child was seeing a different provider at that time.</p>	Yes-99% of children have received Lead-Level screening and/or doctor assessed child for risk.

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 99% Lead Level Results for children were obtained for the 2024-2025 school year, which increased from 88% last year (2023-2024). ● 100% of children were up to date with their Health Assessments (Well Child Checks) within the first 30 days of school. ● 100% of children were up to date on Immunizations within the first 30 days of school. ● 100% of children had Hearing & Vision Screenings completed within the first 45 days of school. ● 99% of children passed Hearing Screens. Parent of the child who referred opted to not secure care due to the child passing a hearing screen at his pediatrician's office. ● 85% of children passed Vision Screens. For the remaining 15%, all (100%) of them have secured care. ● 100% of children's Dental Homes and Up-To-Date Care was assessed during the first 90 days of school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 49% of children already had Dental Homes and Dental Care. Of those, 47% were up to date or had upcoming appointments or scheduled for their Dental Care. ○ 51% of children did not have a Dental Home and opted to secure care with our Partnership through Blue Ridge for Dental Care, including access to their Mobile Dental Bus that visits each Pre-K School Site. ● Dental Bus visited 100% of Pre-K Sites.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health Advisory Committee more targeted for Pre-K. 2. In need of a new Otoacoustic Emission (OAE) device for hearing screens if a child is not able to use a headset and/or potential referral. 3. Training for disabilities/mental health services. 4. New Performance Standards training in Health Services 5. Provide more opportunities for health education for parents and children. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore avenues to determine the best option for meeting needs. 2. Research to consider options available in order to obtain a new one. 3. Will seek to find possible training opportunities on these topics. 4. Search for available trainings on this topic. 5. Visit classrooms to discuss health topics with children, as well as, start a Health Newsletter to go home with children for their parents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2025-2026 School Year 2. 2025-2026 School Year 3. 2025-2026 School Year 4. Spring 2025 5. Fall 2025
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Disabilities Services

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
Joint IEP Meetings with Pre-K and K as children start their transition K.	<p>Education of both Pre-K and K Teachers on the need for these IEP transition meetings to take place.</p> <p>Collaborated with EC Compliance Facilitator, Disabilities/Mental Health Coordinator, and Preschool Education Specialist to enhance and improve our MTSS identification and referral process.</p>	Yes

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 25% of Head Start children have IEPs. Polk County Schools Department of Exceptional Children oversee the identification and interventions for our preschool program, making it a seamless transition to K, and children are identified and served earlier in the preschool program. ● 100% of Head Start children (e.g., new children and those without an IEP) received a DIAL-R screening within the mandated 45-day deadline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Of those, 10 Head Start children were monitored through the Fall TSG checkpoint; and ○ Eight Head Start children were immediately referred to MTSS. ● We collaborate extensively with our school system's Exceptional Children's program to improve our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and referral process for all preschool children. ● All Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings are now focused primarily on supporting individual child needs (rather than housekeeping items)—with an emphasis on discussing ways to improve practices specifically for children who may need more behavior support or differentiated instruction.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
<p>1. Obtain specific Head Start Training on disabilities for Pre-K Nurse/Disabilities/Mental Health Coordinator as well as Performance Standards training.</p>	<p>1. Seek out available opportunities for specific training needed in this area.</p>	<p>1. 2025-2026 School Year</p>

Safe Environments

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
Playgrounds at Saluda, Sunny View, and Polk Central are in need of replacement	A one time supplemental grant was submitted to the Office of Head Start, as well as an application to Dogwood Trust.	Yes—Funds have been awarded by the Office of Head Start and Dogwood Trust

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance DCDEE and Sanitation visits have indicated safe environments are in place • Lead and water testing has been completed with no mitigation needed at this time • Polk County Schools Maintenance Department works to keep our buildings, classrooms, and outdoor spaces safe • Polk County Schools maintains a Safe Schools Plan that collaborates with local law enforcement • Facilities are assessed for safe school practices and monitored • All staff received Playground Safety training.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
1. Construct new playgrounds at Sunnyview, Saluda, and Polk Central Elementary schools.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obtain Approval from Office of Head Start for No-Cost Extension through June 30, 2026 2. January 2025 RFP release/Bid Opening 3. February 2025 Approval of Bid Winner 4. Spring 2025 Work begins 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By August 2025 2. 2025-2026 School Year 3. 2025-2026 School Year 4. 2025-2026 School Year

Nutritional Services

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
Lunchbox service procedures needed improvement	Consulted with sanitation	Yes

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house nutrition services • Eat in classrooms with the group, minimizing transitions • Opportunities available several times each year for children to eat in cafeteria settings to enhance transition to kindergarten • Free meals for all children (e.g., breakfast, lunch, and snacks) • Monthly menus shared with families in English and Spanish • Special dietary needs and substitutions for children and families are addressed and accommodated. • Nutritional needs are identified during family enrollment • We have dedicated handwashing and food-prep sinks in most classrooms

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Serve all meals and snacks family style with authenticity. 2. Invite our Sanitation Consultant to our Inservice Meeting in August 2025 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine sanitation and USDA guidelines that will allow a truer family style meal experience. 2. Coordinate with Nutrition Services to ensure meals are packaged accordingly to accommodate family style dining 3. Purchase additional child-sized serving utensils, pitchers...as needed. 4. Sanitation Consultant provides a "Sanitation Overview" during our Inservice meeting for all staff. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spring 2025 (all action steps 1-4)

Social Emotional and Mental Health Services

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
Supporting classroom staff with professional development and curriculum support in Second Step and Conscious Discipline	Renewed Conscious Discipline access and support coach present in classroom modeling and supporting teachers/students	Yes—Continue to use Second Step Curriculum within and across classrooms.

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● *Pyramid Model Training with Southwest Child Development ● *Pyramid and CLASS Positivity Training through T/TA. ● *Pyramid Model—and supplemental materials—available in all classrooms ● *Autism training for all staff ● *All classrooms have Cozy Cube...etc. ● *Each school has a school counselor available on-site for support and guidance as needed ● *District-wide use of Second Step Program ● *Conscious Discipline ● *Dedicated preschool-based school psychologist for children in the MTSS process. ● *Prosolution access to social emotional topics for all staff; Social Emotional training topics through The Hub (TSG/Smart Teach platform) ● *PLC meeting format altered to better support best practices for the learning needs of children rather than “housekeeping” items.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
1. TPOT (Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool) formal training on use of the Pyramid Model. 2..Use of formal weekly coaching log by our Behavior Support Specialist to document classroom-specific interactions. 3.New Professional Standards Trainings regarding mental health 4.Create a social emotional binder 5.Create a Social/Emotional and Mental Health Advisory Committee which meets at least three times per school year. 6. Enhanced Social-Emotional Support materials available for children and teachers within and across all classrooms.	1. Complete formal TPOT and coaching training. 2. Create a formal coaching documentation system. 3. Search for available trainings on this topic. 4. Create a Social/Emotional resource library based on early childhood and early childhood special education research practices, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Resources for Families b. Resources for Classrooms c. Resources for Children d. Resources for Our Program 5. Create a binder for situations most common and add to as necessary 6. Seek out resources and task the Social/Emotional and Mental Health Advisory Committee with targeting resources for the classrooms.	1. 2025-2026 School Year 2. Summer 2025 3. Spring 2025 4. 2025-2026 School Year 5. 2025-2026 School Year 6. Spring 2025

Family and Community Services

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families signed up for the Parenting Curriculum through Ready Rosie, less than 45% overall participation. 2. No opportunity for extended day/after school. This affects working parents, as there is no program within Polk County for preschoolers after school. EOY survey indicated 34% of families had interest in a program. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families are encouraged to sign up and receive information at time of enrollment, initial family interaction with teachers, and at Fall Conference. 2. The district after school program secured grant funding for preschool children to attend the program. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participation in the program is currently at 75% overall. 2. 20% of preschool children now attend the after school program at the school where they are enrolled.

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of families completed the Family Assessment of Strengths and Needs document at enrollment, enabling staff to immediately address needs and refer to local resources and providers. • 98% average participation across the classrooms so far this year in family engagement activities in the classrooms and at the schools. • 100% of "crisis" needs have been met in 2023-2024 and so far in 2024-2025. Strong community partners and connections through school counselors and the school social worker assists in fulfilling family needs of emergency food, clothing, household items, and utility payment assistance. • 100% of families received the Family Survey at the end of the 2023-2024 school year with 25% return rate. Positive results such as: 97% of families felt comfortable and welcome visiting the classroom and 100% felt comfortable speaking with their child's teacher. • Each year there are, on average, 26 classroom family engagement activities, 5 school-wide family events, 4 take-home family engagement activities, and 7 field trip opportunities across the program. In addition, there are 3-4 community wide events for families to participate in, become more involved in their child(ren)'s education, and to promote the Head Start Program.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Needed increase in families participating in an organized committee at each school and program-wide. 2. Attend training on new performance standards 3. Establish a Family Services Advisory Council which meets 3 times per year. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family Services Specialist will work with PTO groups at each school to encourage preschool parents to be involved, and encourage more parents to participate in the Policy Council. 2. Search for available trainings on this topic. 3. Invite parents/caregivers to participate in the council, set meeting dates. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Groundwork will be done Spring of 2025 in order to start the 2025-2026 school year with newly enrolled family participants. 2. Date for training in Spring 2025 3. Meeting dates for 2025-2026 set

Fiscal Management

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
One-time ARP funds are ending	Careful spending of the ARP funds to ensure they could be sustainable was considered. Up front, we knew these funds were temporary so we planned accordingly.	Yes

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with the Head Start director and the Polk County Schools finance officer is strong. The finance officer is responsible for the fiscal operations of the program with communication and input from the Head Start director. • The fiscal team of Polk County Schools possess the education and experience to effectively navigate the financial aspects of the program. School external annual audits continue to be compliant with all state, federal, and local accounting requirements. • 2024 External Audit was completed with no areas of concern.

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
1. Maintaining training on federal and state fiscal guidelines.	Seek opportunities for the Finance Officer and Director to do training on fiscal responsibilities.	By June 30, 2025 the Director and Finance Officer will complete fiscal training offered by the Office of Head Start, NC PreK, or other entities that support federal and state fiscal regulations.

Program Design and Management

Area Identified Last Year as Needing Improvement	Action Taken	Has this Action Been Resolved? Yes/No
1. Completion of the Tryon Elementary PreK Annex	1. Monitored progress towards completion, obtaining COO, and compliance with state and federal agencies	1. Yes

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FA2 Review in December of 2023 was completed with only one area of concern which has been corrected ● All sites remain at the highest quality point level of 5 Star centers with NCDCCDEE ● Teachers are highly qualified with NCDPI licensure in early childhood. ● 78% of teacher assistants hold a 2 year degree or higher and 22% hold a CDA ● Low staff turnover ● All sites hold a 5 Star Rated License in good standing with the NC DCDEE

Opportunities for Improvement	Action Steps	Improvement Monitoring and Completion Date
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desire to staff each classroom with 3 adults Currently 20 Head Start children have IEPs (25%) Additional classroom staff would be beneficial 2. Increase substitute pool 3. Develop and implement a substitute training online module and/or include substitutes in our annual Proolutions online subscription. 4. Increase parental representation on Policy Council for each site 5. Reporting, Monitoring & Data Use CO review on a regular basis 6. Provide a floater at Saluda and Sunnyview locations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to seek funding opportunities to support additional staff 2. Partner with Human Resources and local colleges and universities to actively recruit substitutes specific to Preschool. 3. Develop and implement a substitute training online module and/or include preschool substitutes in our annual Proolutions online subscription. \ 4. Focus on recruitment for Policy Council at enrollment 5. Set a schedule for monitoring data review on a monthly basis 6. See funding opportunities for floater positions at Saluda at Sunny View and Saluda 	By December 2025