



Head Start and Early Head Start

2021-2022
Annual Report



Why

To nurture safe and trusting relationships so that all members of the community know they matter and believe in their potential to impact their world.

MESSAGE FROM THE Director

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to share the 2021/2022 Annual Report for The Opportunity Alliance Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. The following report highlights our activities and accomplishments over the past year that have supported children and their families across Cumberland County.

As we emerged from the grip of the COVID-19 pandemic, our program experienced the same workforce shortages crippling the nation's early childhood sector. Several of our classrooms continued to be closed and our childcare site remained at 2/3 capacity. Many of our teachers were re-located to support opening classrooms.

With new teams in place, we opened our doors in the fall. The impacts of the pandemic became quickly apparent. Children who had been home for the previous two years struggled in the group setting. Developmental concerns emerged and many children required additional social-emotional support. At the same time, Child Development Services system which ensures special education services for children birth through five was experiencing unprecedented strain and was unable to provide needed supports.

Our program quickly shifted to meet children's needs. We modified schedules, reduced group size,

hired special educators, and integrated mental health clinicians more deeply into classrooms. With more individualized support, children settled into classroom environments and were able to make gains in their learning and development.

Teams partnered with parents to work through safety and behavior concerns, collaborating to provide consistent strategies at home and in school. And while families were still not able to actively participate in classroom activities due to COVID-19, they engaged deeply in their children's education through goal setting, family conferences and Policy Council activities. Family Advocates and Family Visitors worked side-by-side with families – accessing resources to meet their basic needs and supporting them to take steps towards achieving their own goals.

By all measures, the resilience of our staff, families and children made this year a success upon which we will continue to build in the years ahead.



Sincerely,

 Debra Flynn

2021-2022 BY THE Numbers

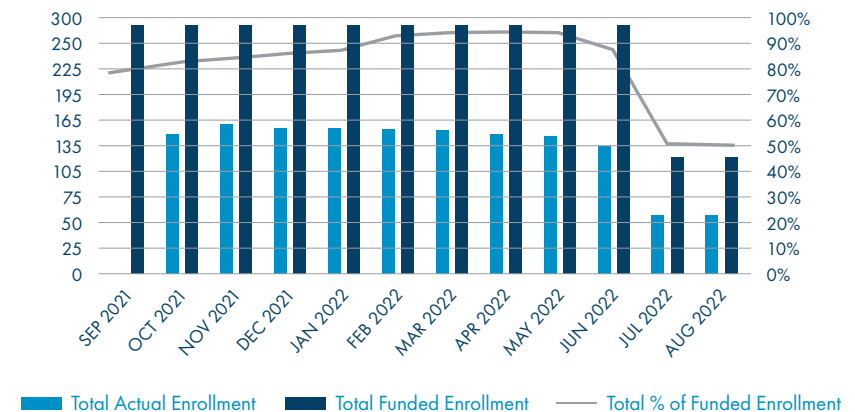
149

TOA's funded enrollment is 272 slots. We are funded to serve 122 children during the months of June, July, and August.

13%

Percentage of eligible children served (extrapolated from Maine Kids Count, 2020 for Cumberland County)

AVG. MONTHLY ENROLLMENT (AS % OF FUNDED ENROLLMENT)



SITES

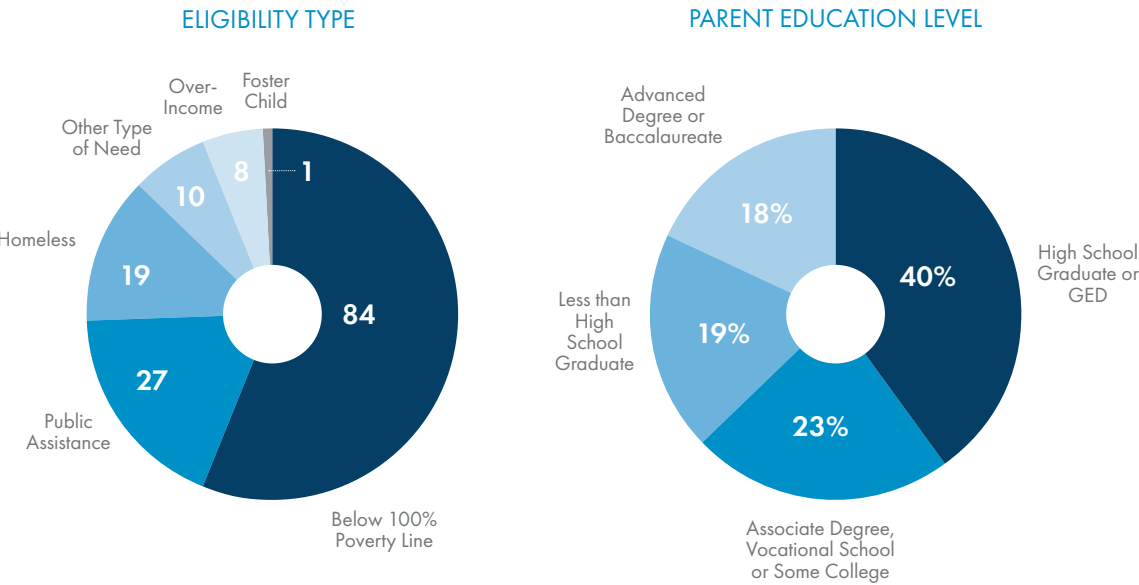
BRIDGTON	PORTLAND	WESTBROOK	GREATER PORTLAND HOME-BASED	LAKES REGION HOME-BASED
1 Head Start	3 Head Start	3 Head Start/Pre-K	5 Family Visitors	1 Family Visitor
18 slots	3 Head Start/Child Care	44 slots	40 slots	12 slots
GORHAM		SOUTH PORTLAND		
1 Head Start	3 Early Head Start/Child Care	1 Head Start		
18 slots	122 slots	18 slots		

All Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms are licensed by the state of Maine, staffed by credentialed professionals, and participate in the Quality Improvement Rating System (QRIS).

WHO WE Served

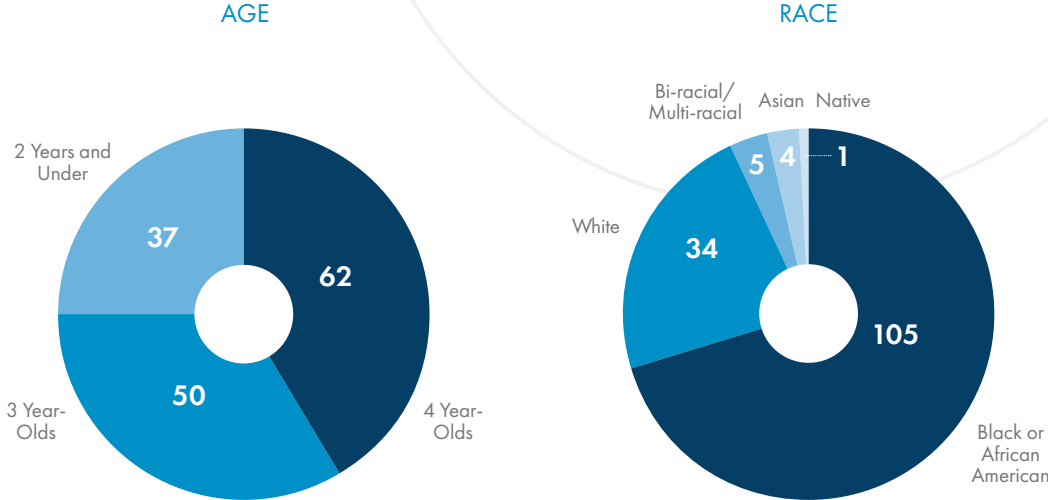
FAMILIES AT A GLANCE

The Opportunity Alliance served a total of 149 children and their families in our Head Start & Early Head Start programs.



CHILDREN AT A GLANCE

The children served by The Opportunity Alliance Head Start and Early Head Start programs in the 2021-2022 program year were developmentally, culturally, and linguistically diverse.

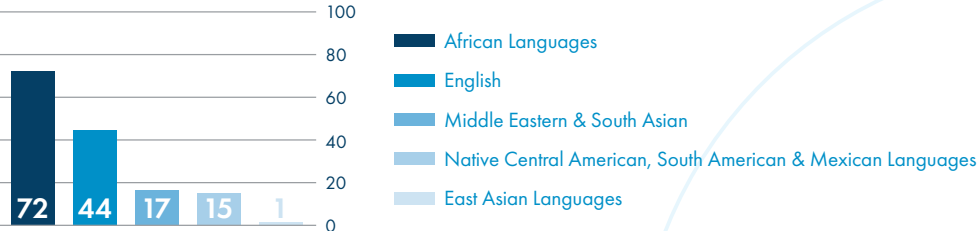


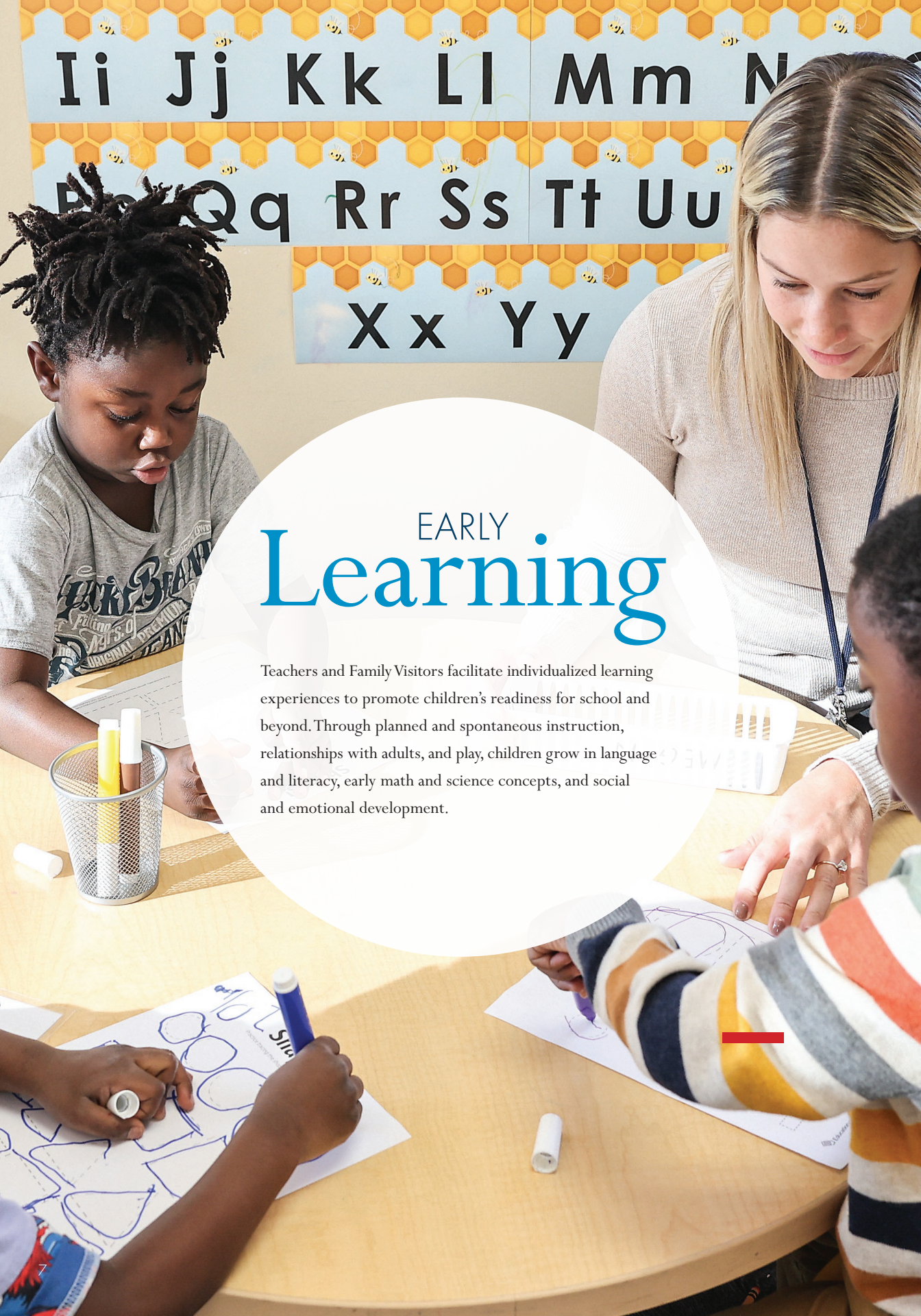
NEURODIVERSITY

Through initial developmental screenings and ongoing assessment and observation, many children were referred to Child Development Services (CDS) for special services. Due to the lack of providers, many children who were qualified for services did not receive them.



PRIMARY LANGUAGE AT HOME





EARLY Learning

Teachers and Family Visitors facilitate individualized learning experiences to promote children's readiness for school and beyond. Through planned and spontaneous instruction, relationships with adults, and play, children grow in language and literacy, early math and science concepts, and social and emotional development.

OUR APPROACH TO SCHOOL READINESS

Research shows that children who receive high-quality early childhood experiences and strong family support are far more likely to succeed in school and throughout their life.

CHILDREN ARE PREPARED FOR SCHOOL

We believe children thrive in nurturing environments in which they are trusted and respected. Children benefit from a comprehensive program that supports all areas of development. Children learn through relationships with teachers and peers, through creative open-ended play and through exploring intentionally designed classroom environments. To support learning, our program utilizes the Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers and Opening the World of Learning (OWL) and Second Step for preschoolers. Our Family Visitors use the Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum with families in the home.

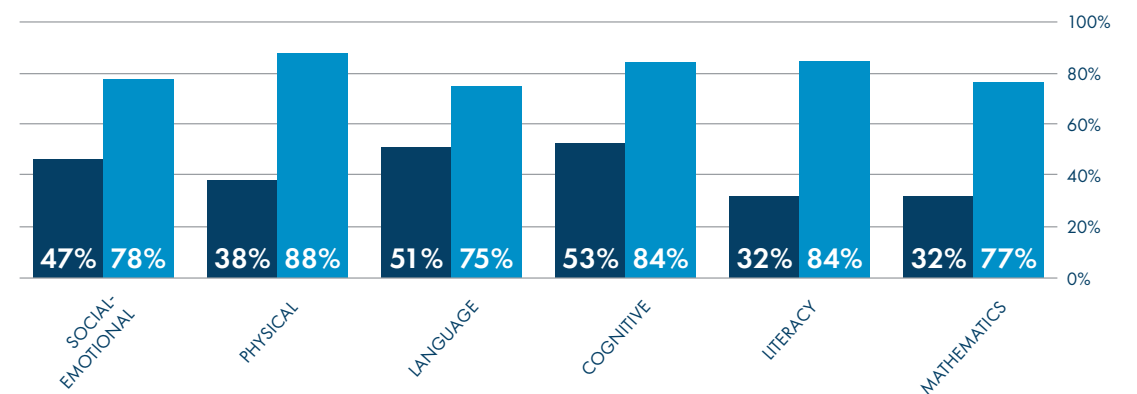
FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING

To maximize child outcomes, we work to support family stability and well-being. Parents are considered their children's first and most important teachers. They are viewed as partners in identifying the learning needs and goals of their children. Through home visits, parent conferences, playgroups, volunteering, parent committees and Policy Council, parents are fully engaged in the education of their children.

SCHOOLS ARE READY AS CHILDREN TRANSITION INTO KINDERGARTEN

We cannot achieve our goals without strong community partnerships. We strategically collaborate with other providers to improve access to services for our children and families and to support their transition to Kindergarten. We strive to partner with welcoming schools by inviting them into our program, participating in transition meetings, and providing them with important information as children and families move on to the next step in their journey.

% COMPARISON OF 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN MEETING OR EXCEEDING TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD WIDELY HELD EXPECTATIONS FOR FALL 2021 AND SPRING 2022





Health

Children receive health and development screenings, nutritious meals, oral health and mental health support. Programs connect families with medical, dental, and mental health services, and ensure that children are receiving the services they need.



MENTAL HEALTH

As families emerged from the pandemic and children returned to centers, classrooms experienced a pervasive increase in social and emotional needs. Our COVID-19 funding allowed us to hire an additional clinician so that we could expand mental health services, including individual child therapy to children, support to families, and consultation to staff across the program.

38

Children receiving play therapy

100%

classrooms and family visitors received MH consultation

100%

classrooms and family visitors received MH consultation

38

Children receiving play therapy

100%

classrooms and family visitors received MH consultation

FAMILY Well-Being

Parents and families are supported in achieving their own goals, such as housing stability, continued education, and financial security. Programs support and strengthen parent-child relationships and engage families around children's learning and development.

105
Emergency/
Crisis Services

116
Health
Education

33
Parenting
Education

52
ESL
Training

116
Education
Training

As families returned and new families joined the program, we explored innovative ways to engage and create community together. We continued to use technology and strategies learned the previous year to offer options for families to connect with their Family Advocate and Family Visitor and to engage in groups. Parent meetings and playgroups were offered both in person and through Zoom, allowing for greater participation. Policy Council continued to meet on Zoom, utilizing interpreter rooms for language support. We provided program laptops for representatives to use for their term ensuring equal access for all families.

Family Advocates and Family Visitors partnered with each family using a coaching model to identify their strengths and needs and to support them to identify goals for themselves and their families. We supported participants to access resources for basic needs such as food and rent relief, physical and mental health services, and ongoing education and career training. We continued our commitment to serving families holistically through collaborative family conferences that included Teachers, Family Advocates, Disabilities Specialists, and Mental Health Clinicians. Family conferences in the fall were an opportunity to share skills from home and school and to collaborate on developmental goals for children while conferences in the spring provided an opportunity to celebrate the year of learning together.



Funding

The Opportunity Alliance's fiscal year 2019-2020 included the dates of July 1st, 2021 through June 30th, 2022.

FEDERAL FUNDING

TYPE OF FUNDING	HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START
BASE GRANT	2,853,501	980,335
T&TA	29,171	20,818
COLA	65,060	22,352
QUALITY	10,253	5,964

FEDERAL BASE GRANT EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY

BUDGET CATEGORY	HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START
PERSONELL	1,454,037	633,274
FRINGE BENEFITS	403,959	129,373
TRAVEL	2,237	181
EQUIPMENT	0	0
SUPPLIES	10,120	1,788
CONTRACTUAL	60,572	3,072
CONSTRUCTION	0	0
OTHER	610,038	105,273
INDIRECT	312,538	107,374
TOTAL	2,853,501	980,335

FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS EXPENDITURE BY CATEGORY

OTHER FUNDING

TYPE OF FUNDING	AMOUNT
STATE EARLY HEAD START	193,192
USDA (CACFP)	57,991
CHILDCARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM	428,805
CHILDCARE STABILIZATION GRANT	197,040
MAINECARE (COPT)	67,000
WESTBROOK PRE-K PARTNERSHIP	100,000
TOWER FOUNDATION	8,000
UNITED WAY	150,000
CDS (SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION)	18,000

LOOKING Ahead

Next year marks the end of the five-year grant cycle. With the new application in the spring of 2023, we plan to also submit a change of scope application to allow us to address the structural challenges facing our program. As this Annual Report demonstrates, our community of children and families is unique and requires a specialized program design not afforded in our current grant. Our goal is to provide the highest quality of services to children and families while supporting staff in their own professional growth and development.



The Opportunity Alliance



Bridgton
6 Meadow Street

Gorham
28 Husky Drive

Portland
81 East Oxford Street
102-104 Riverton Drive

85 Grant Street
215 Congress Street

South Portland
50 Lydia Lane

Westbrook
110 Huntress Ave

TOA assures non-discrimination in all aspects of program participation, in conformance with Federal regulations. No one will be denied access to any aspect of program participation because of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, veteran status, or political affiliation or belief. Some of the services described here are partially funded by the Department of Human Services.