

BUTLER COUNTY CHILDREN'S CENTER, INC.

dba



*SERVING ARMSTRONG, BEAVER, BUTLER, INDIANA, &
LAWRENCE COUNTIES*

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

139 RIEGER RD • BUTLER, PA 16001

724-287-2761

www.earlylearningconnections.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forward	4-6
Mission, Vision, and Values	7
Description of the Organization	8
Funding and Budget Information	9-10
Human Resources	11
Butler County Program Enrollment	12-13
Armstrong County Program Enrollment	14-15
School Readiness/Child Outcomes	16-19
Special Services Report	20-22
Family Involvement	23-24
In-Kind	25-26
Health Services Report	27-28
Pre-K Counts	29-30
Childcare Services	31
Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC)	32-34
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	35

FORWARD

Education Programs

The year 2025 led to many great changes for Early Learning Connections (ELC). From an educational standpoint, ELC successfully developed and submitted a new five-year Head Start grant. This grant provides a roadmap to support children and families within a timeline and affords the organization the ability to change and make updates to meet the needs of the families and children served. Staff and departments serving this federal grant used data, outcomes and prior goals to create a fully informed strategic direction to guide our continued work over the next five years. Early Learning Connections was also awarded the Indiana County Head Start grant. News arrived in the spring, and the staff and departments worked diligently to create a thorough transition. We were able to interview and hire 45 staff members previously employed by Indiana County Head start. The dedication and work put forth by staff to both complete the transition and open the doors for services to begin in October 2025 is a true example of the continued success of Early Learning Connections. Strides have been made throughout the Indiana community, and we are excited to bring our experience and resources to the county. In other educational news, ELC was recognized for achieving Tier 1 Sustaining Program Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PW-PBIS) implementation in Butler County and for reaching Fidelity of Implementation in Armstrong County. Indiana County will begin its PBIS course of implementation in early 2026.

Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) Region 3

The ELRC, Early Learning Resource Center Region 3, achieved excellent results in the 2024-25 annual performance monitoring report, meeting all Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) performance requirements with zero findings. Financially, the ELRC was able to significantly support the counties of Region 3 (Armstrong,

Beaver, Butler, Indiana, and Lawrence). Through the subsidized Child Care Works (CCW) program, a total payout of over \$19.6 million was distributed; the Continuous Quality Improvement Program (CQI) grant awarded over \$368,000 to eligible child care providers. The Infant Toddler Contracted Slots (ITCS) providers in the region received over \$738,000 and a new Start Up and Expansion grant opportunity utilized over \$470,000 in total funding. Professional Development, another facet of work through the ELRC, assisted numerous child care providers to attain a higher-level STARS quality rating. Staff supporting the licensed child care centers continued to deliver needs-based resource and referral services to clients, providers and the public, and collaborated with the Professional Development Organization (PDO) to assist childcare staff to pursue ongoing educational credentials. The Rapid Response Team (RRT) and its financial support from the state has also been extended for another year ending in December of 2026. This program offers support to childcare providers in the Region 3 counties, and has been very instrumental in minimizing behaviors, supporting staff with ideas and techniques and eliminating suspensions and expulsions.

Maintenance/Safety

Our physical locations have received attention and upgrades through 2025. With the aforementioned addition of Indiana County, we have acquired buildings, vehicles, and assumed leases to serve the children and families of that county. In doing that, we were able to update and streamline our fob systems to provide better and easier access to our facilities. Safety, as always, is a top priority which we've met with our liability insurance providers and brokerage representatives. Due to the diligence of our staff and the constant delivery of information to assist in tracking safety concerns we have a 0% loss ratio for injury claims in 2025, and for the past 5 years our loss prevention ratio is 3.75% with 6 claims total.

Fiscal

Our fiscal department has been very busy with the addition of Indiana County, the acquisition of the related buildings, and the continued finance activities. The year 2025 provided some changes in the reporting of fiscal information and the submission of various data points. Our fiscal team has been able to smoothly transition reports and data entry. Our Core and Management teams have continued to evolve and implement improvements and changes to streamline our approach and improve overall functions.

As we enter into 2026 we have a renewed outlook and sense of purpose. Early Learning Connections is dedicated to our goal of providing excellent services, enhancing communities, and growing in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Change is constant in all aspects of life. We want to meet those changes by being aware, prepared, and embracing what the future holds. Thank you for your continued interest and support. It is truly a pleasure to serve as the CEO of Early Learning Connections.

With Gratitude and Continued Dedication,

Elisa Spadafera

CEO, Early Learning Connections

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Mission

The mission of Early Learning Connections is to provide a variety of high-quality early learning programs that foster a safe and positive culture through kindness and respect to meet the comprehensive needs of families.

Vision

The vision of Early Learning Connections is to be the leading provider of children's programs and quality services for families.

Values

Quality...Integrity...Commitment

ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION

Early Learning Connections is a private nonprofit 501c3 that is run by a volunteer Board of Directors. Early Learning Connections was incorporated in 1973 for the purpose of providing childcare services for children in Butler County. Since 1973, Early Learning Connections has evolved into the leading childcare provider in the county, as well as Armstrong and Indiana counties, and has developed additional social services to serve the needs of the community.

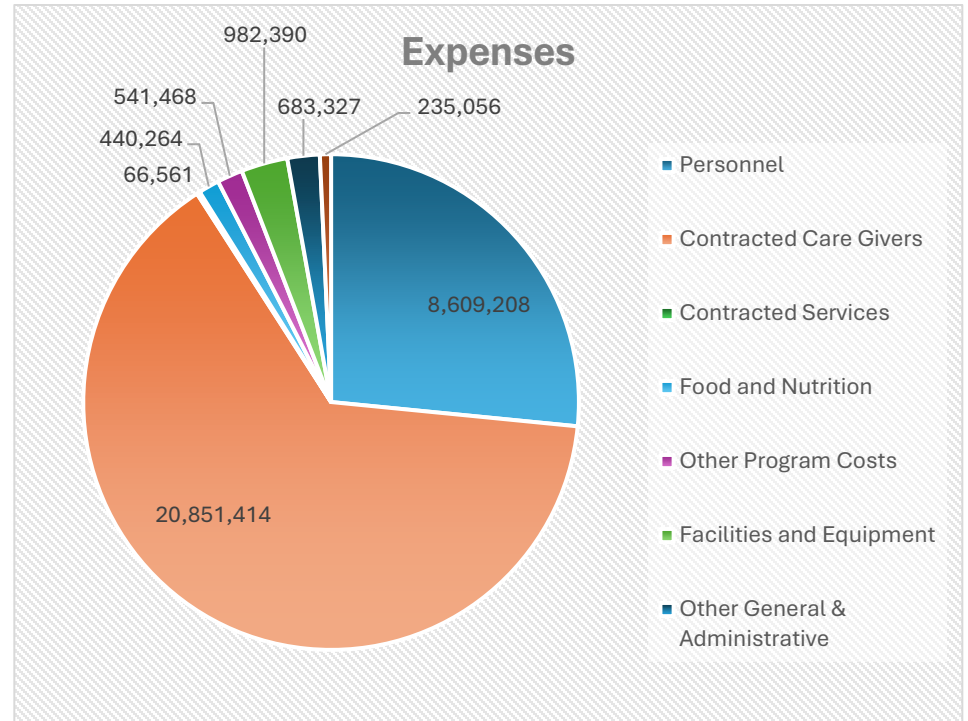
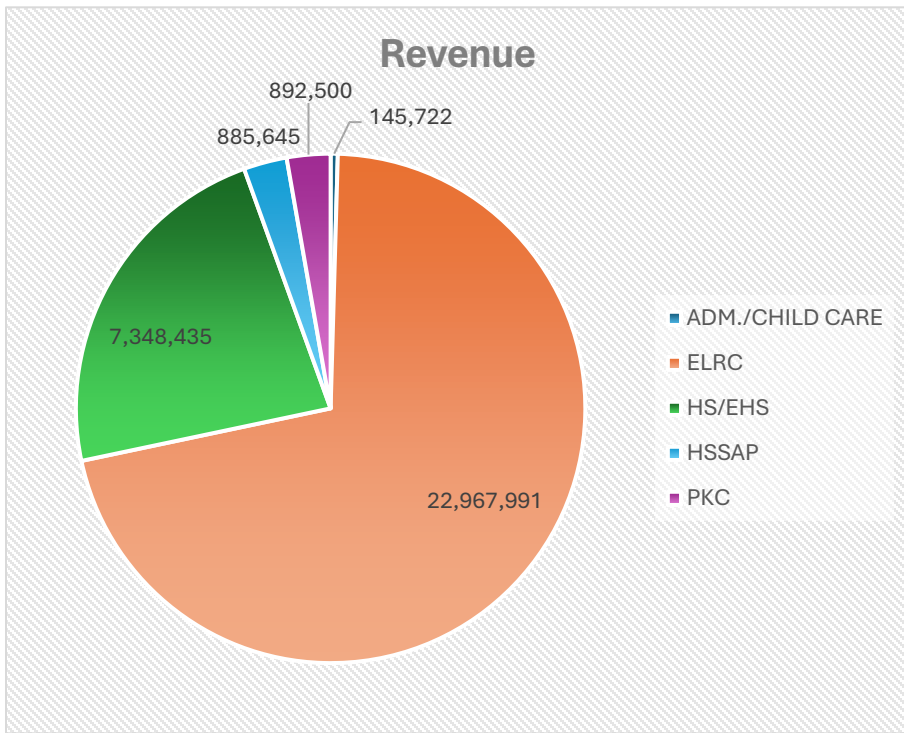
Programs:

- Childcare
- Head Start
- Infant Toddler Contracted Slots (ITCS)
- Early Head Start
- Pre-K Counts
- Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

FUNDING AND BUDGET INFORMATION

JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

Annual Report										
Total Revenue by Source		219667								
2024-25		Admin.	Child Care	ELRC	HS/EHS	HSSAP	Pre-K	Total		
Govt. Grants-					6,973,626	885,645	892,500	8,751,771		
ELRC-Federal				13,844,269				13,844,269		
ELRC-State				9,123,722				9,123,722		
CACFP-Fed.			-		374,809		-	374,809		
Fees-DHS/ELRC-State			86,483					86,483		
Other Grants-Key. Stars-Fed.			-					-		
Other Grants-Key. Stars.-State			-					-		
Other Grants-Comm. Action-State			-					-		
Other Grants-Comm. Action-Federal			-					-		
Total Govt.			86,483	22,967,991	7,348,435	885,645	892,500	32,181,054		
Program Fees-Priv.			-					-		
U. Way (Net)/In Kind-Local			32,464		-			32,464		
Other-Training Revenue- PA Keys			-					-		
Other-Rent/Interest/Training/Misc./Donations		-	26,775	-				26,775		
Total Revenue by Source		-	145,722	22,967,991	7,348,435	885,645	892,500	32,240,293	32,240,293.00	
Public-		-	118,947	22,967,991	7,348,435	885,645	892,500	32,213,518		
Private		-	26,775		-			26,775		
		-	145,722	22,967,991	7,348,435	885,645	892,500	32,240,293		
		ADMIN/CC		ELRC	HS/EHS/HSSAP		Pre-K	Total		
		Dollars	%	Dollars	%	Dollars	%	Dollars	%	Dollars
Federal		-	0.0%	13,844,269	60.3%	7,348,435	89.2%	-	0.0%	21,192,704
State		86,483	59.3%	9,123,722	39.7%	885,645	10.8%	892,500	100.0%	10,988,350
Private		-	0.0%							-
Other		59,239	40.7%	-	0.0%	-	0.000%			59,239
Total		145,722	100.000%	22,967,991	1	8,234,080	1	892,500	1	32,240,293
		0%		71%		26%		3%		
Amounts per MD Published Trial Balance and Schedule of Federal Awards										
United Way-netted payouts to other agencies										



HUMAN RESOURCES

JANUARY 1, 2025 – DECEMBER 31, 2025

Number of Employees:

Full Time	179
Part Time Plus	30
Part Time	5
Substitutes	7
Total	221

Terminations	33
Total Departures	33

Full Time New Hires	66
Part Time New Hires	21
Total Hires	87

Employee Turn Over Rate = 14.9%

Net Headcount Change = + 54 Employees

BUTLER COUNTY HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

Families Served:

Head Start – 167

Early Head Start – 61

Program Wide – 228

Children Served:

Head Start – 186

Early Head Start – 91

Program Wide – 277



BUTLER COUNTY

Month/Year	Head Start		Early Head Start	
	Enrolled	% of Funded Enrollment	Enrolled	% of Funded Enrollment
July 2024	~	~	56	100%
August 2024	157	75%	47	84%
September 2024	156	75%	54	96%
October 2024	168	80%	51	91%
November 2024	164	78%	49	88%
December 2024	172	82%	51	91%
January 2025	180	86%	52	93%
February 2025	182	87%	52	93%
March 2025	187	89%	52	93%
April 2025	191	91%	55	98%
May 2025	190	91%	56	100%
June 2025	175	90%	55	98%

ARMSTRONG COUNTY HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

Families Served:

Head Start – 124

Early Head Start – 24

Program Wide – 148

Children Served:

Head Start – 138

Early Head Start – 29

Program Wide – 167



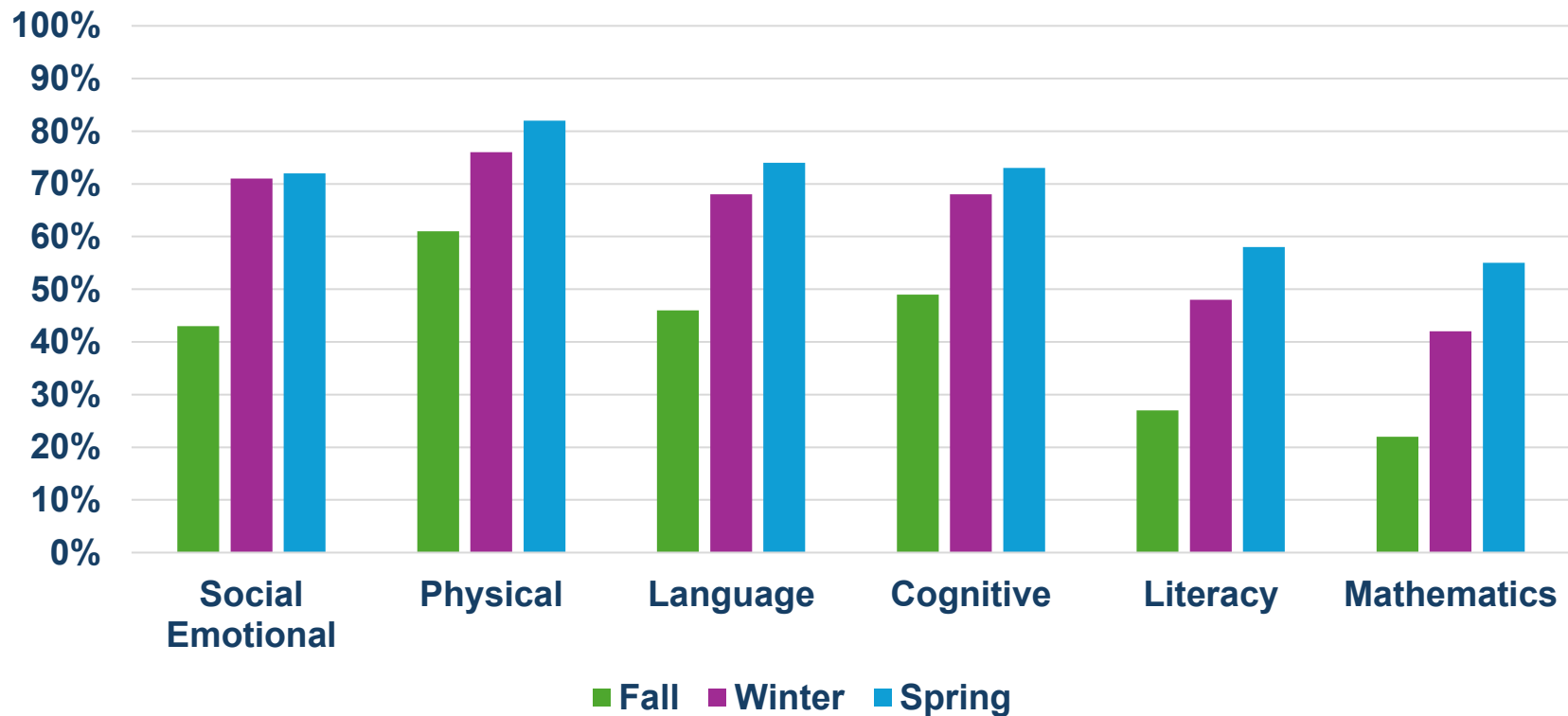
ARMSTRONG COUNTY

Month/Year	Head Start		Early Head Start	
	Enrolled	% of Funded Enrollment	Enrolled	% of Funded Enrollment
July 2024	~	~	23	64%
August 2024	112	88%	25	69%
September 2024	115	90%	23	64%
October 2024	118	92%	22	61%
November 2024	118	92%	21	58%
December 2024	121	95%	21	58%
January 2025	125	98%	21	58%
February 2025	124	97%	21	58%
March 2025	123	96%	23	64%
April 2025	124	97%	22	61%
May 2025	124	97%	22	61%
June 2025	109	96%	21	58%

SCHOOL READINESS/CHILD OUTCOMES

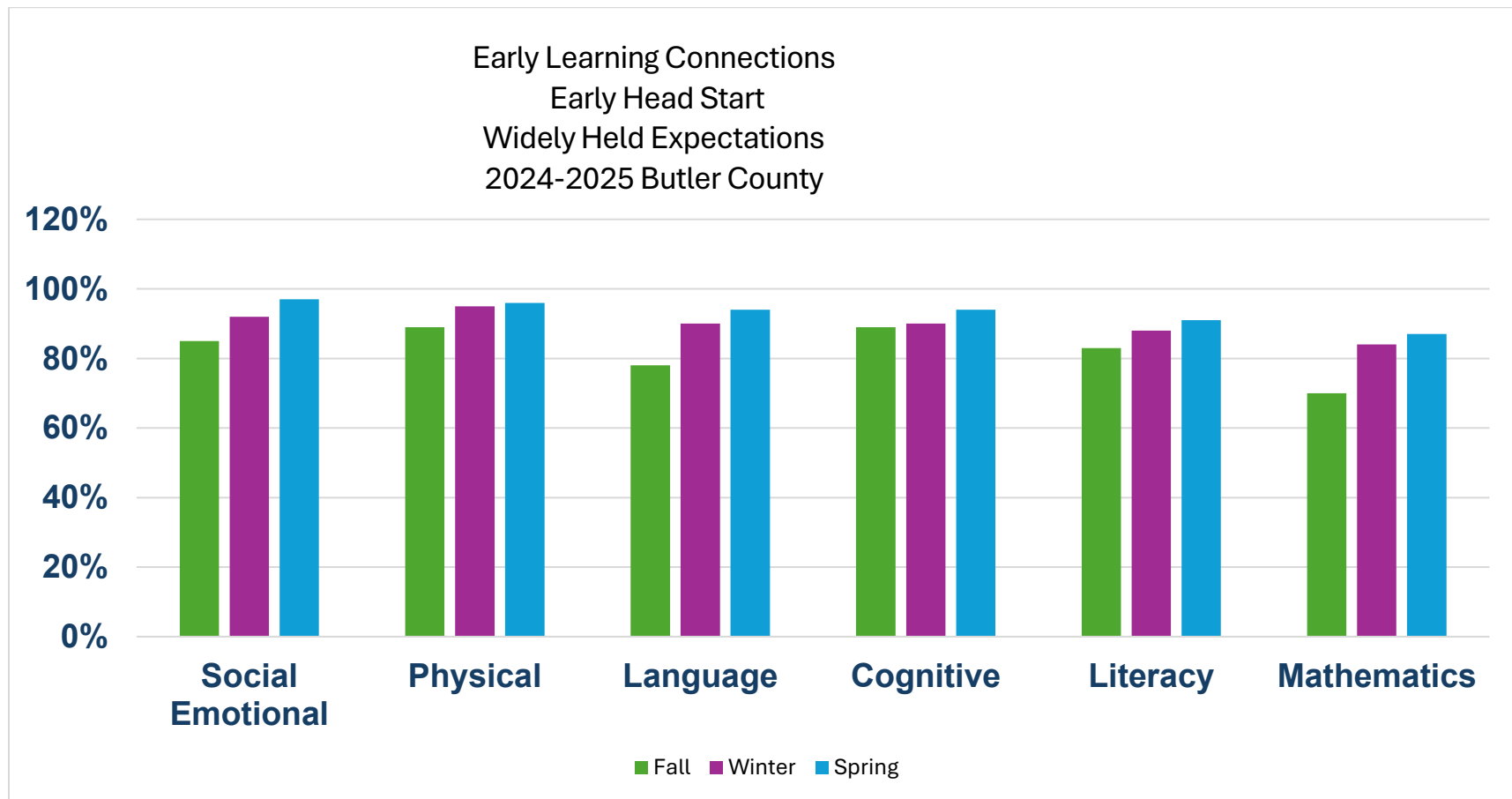
BUTLER COUNTY HEAD START

Early Learning Connections
Program Wide Overall Child Outcomes Towards
School Readiness Goals
Preschool 3 and 4 Year Olds
2024-2025 Butler County



SCHOOL READINESS/CHILD OUTCOMES

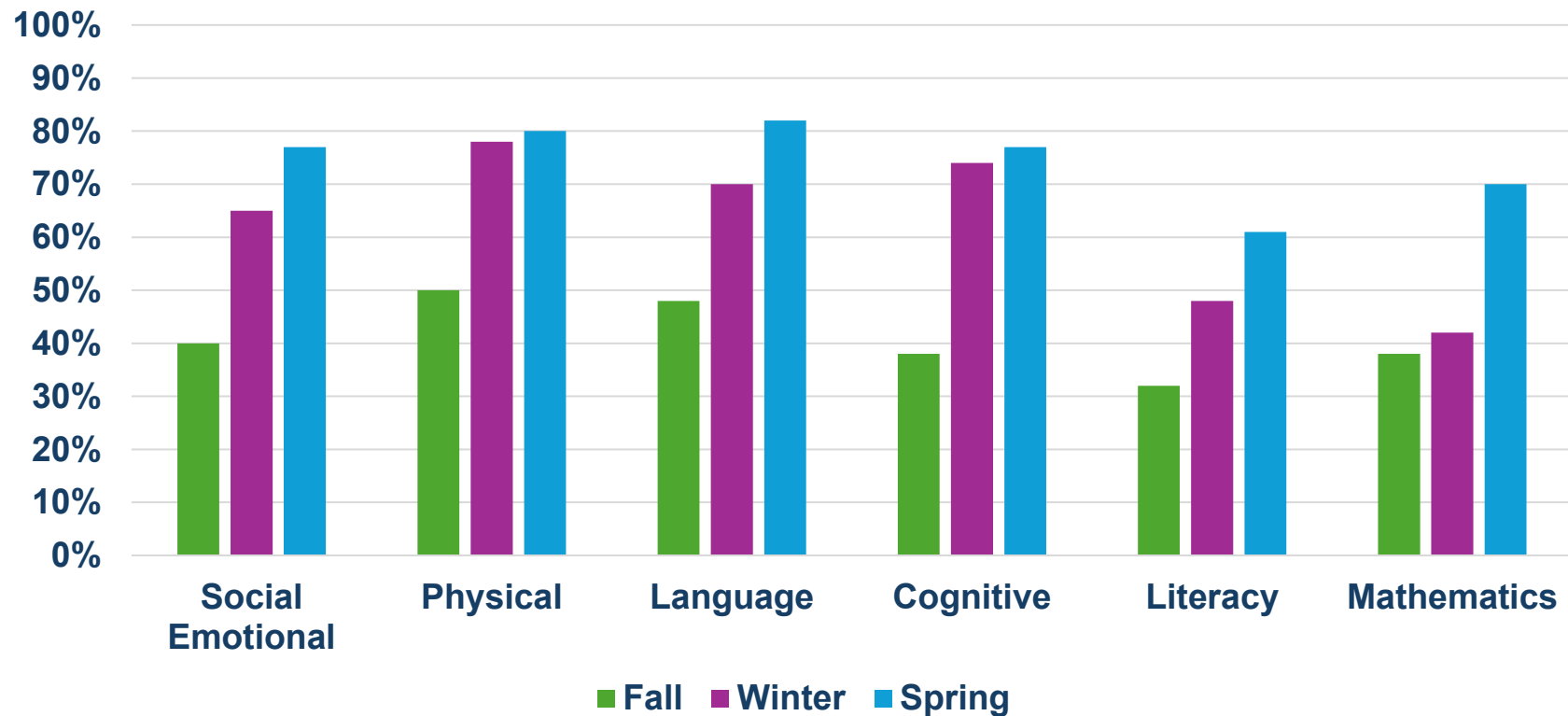
BUTLER COUNTY EARLY HEAD START



SCHOOL READINESS/CHILD OUTCOMES

ARMSTRONG COUNTY HEAD START

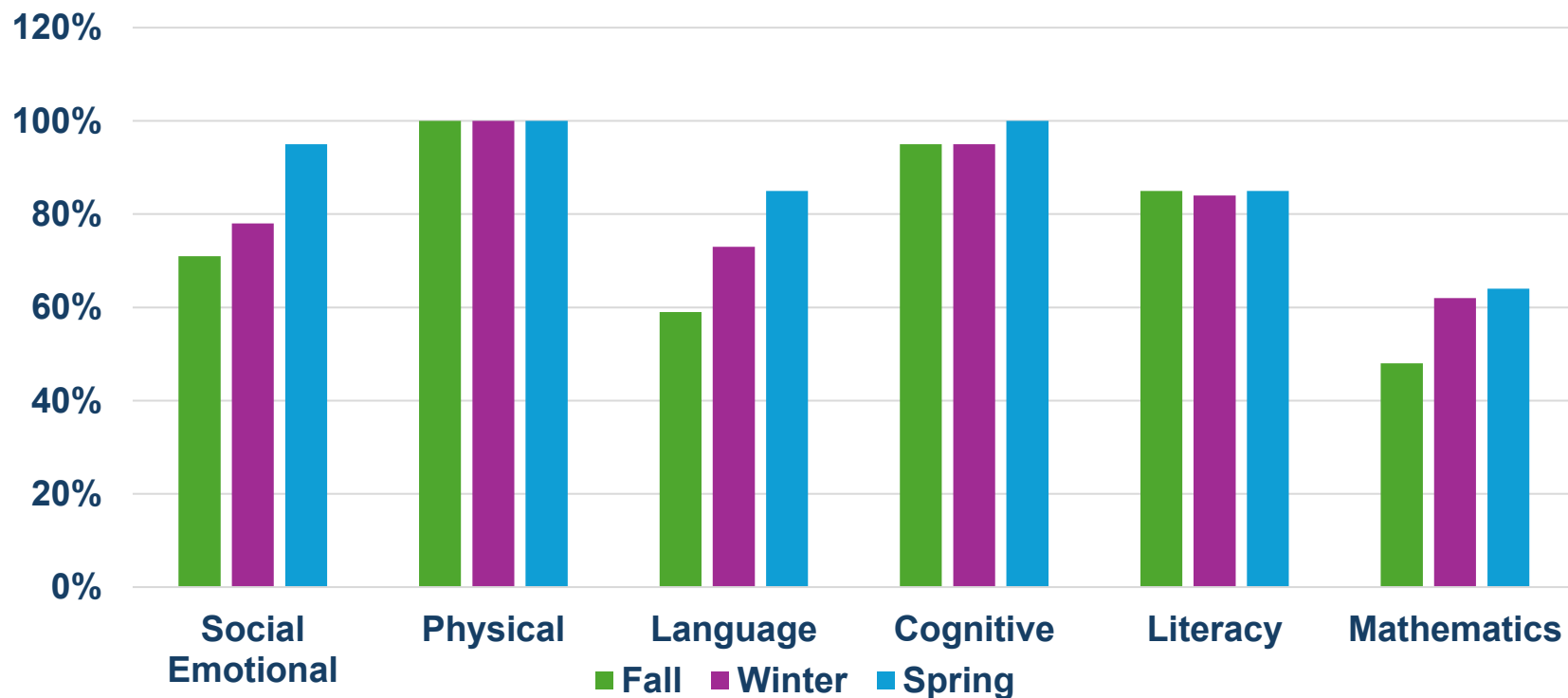
Early Learning Connections
Program Wide Overall Child Outcomes Towards
School Readiness Goals
Preschool 3 and 4 Year Olds
2024-2025 Armstrong County



SCHOOL READINESS/CHILD OUTCOMES

ARMSTRONG COUNTY EARLY HEAD START

Early Learning Connections
Early Head Start
Widely Held Expectations
2024-2025 Armstrong County



SPECIAL SERVICES REPORT

2024-2025 PROGRAM YEAR

Butler Head Start Preschool Disabilities Services

56 children enrolled in the program had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) during the enrollment year and were eligible to receive special education and related services provided by the Local Education Agency (LEA). Of the 56 children identified, 33 were determined to be eligible to receive special education and related services prior to the start of the program year and 23 were found to be eligible during the program year.

Butler Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Part C Early Intervention Services

14 children who participated in the Early Head Start program had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) during the enrollment year, indicating they were eligible by the Part C agency to receive early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Of the 14 children identified, 9 were determined eligible to receive early intervention services prior to the program year and 5 were found eligible during the program year.

Butler Head Start Mental Health Consultation

The Mental Health Consultants provided consultation and/or referral services to 104 families during the program year and 25 were referred to outside services.

Pre-K Counts Disabilities Services

27 children enrolled in the program had an active Individualized Education Program (IEP) during the enrollment year and received special education and related services from the Local Education Agency (LEA). 17 of the children were determined eligible to receive special education services prior to the start of the program year and 10 were found to be eligible during the program year.

Childcare Disabilities Services

1 child enrolled in the Infant/Toddler Childcare Program had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) during the enrollment year and received all services on site in the childcare environment. 5 child enrolled in the Preschool Childcare Program had an Individual Education Program (IEP) during the enrollment year.

Referrals Head Start, Pre-K Counts, and Pre-K Childcare for Further Assessment

A total of 24 children were referred to the Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV for further assessment based on their Developmental Screening Results.

Armstrong Head Start Preschool Disabilities Services

48 children enrolled in the program had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) during the enrollment year and were eligible to receive special education and related services provided by the Local Education Agency (LEA). Of the 48 children identified, 25 were determined to be eligible to receive special education and related services prior to the start of the program year and 23 were found to be eligible during the program year.

Armstrong Early Head Start Infant and Toddler Part C Early Intervention Services

7 children who participated in the Early Head Start program had an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) during the enrollment year, indicating they were eligible by the Part C agency to receive early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Of the 7 children identified, 3 were determined eligible to receive early intervention services prior to the program year and 4 were found eligible during the program year.

Armstrong Head Start Mental Health Consultation

The Mental Health Consultant provided consultation and/or referral services to 51 families during the program year; 13 were referred for outside services.

Referrals Head Start, Pre-K Counts for Further Assessment

17 children were referred to the ARIN Intermediate Unit 28 for further assessment based on the developmental screening results

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Head Start recognizes the importance of supporting parents' efforts to be their child's first and most important teacher. Early Learning Connections' approach to family involvement includes providing opportunities for parents to plan and carry out activities and events:

- To connect with peers as Head Start/Early Head Start families
- To build positive parent-child relationships
- For children and the males who are involved in the children's lives

COUNTY WIDE EVENTS

	Number of Events	Number of Children Attending	Number of Adults Attending
Armstrong SRU Events	4	83	41
Butler SRU Events	4	62	62
Armstrong In-Person Family Event	4	186	146
Butler In-Person Family Event	4	205	187

BUTLER COUNTY

Event	Number of Children	Number of Adults
Open House	81	99
Stay and Play	55	60
Parent Meeting	~	146
Positive Solutions for Family (Parent Curriculum)	~	6
Moving On and Moving Up	217	416

ARMSTRONG COUNTY

Event	Number of Children	Number of Adults
Open House	56	72
Stay and Play	59	53
Parent Meeting	~	75
Positive Solutions for Family (Parent Curriculum)	~	5
Moving On and Moving Up	190	304

2024 – 2025 IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

BUTLER COUNTY

MONTH	HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START	Combined Total	24-25 Total
July 2024	36,902	33,648	70,550	70,550
August 2024	52,977	37,358	90,334	160,884
September 2024	156,178	35,097	191,275	352,159
October 2024	147,378	35,859	183,237	535,396
November 2024	123,595	22,332	145,927	681,323
December 2024	83,477	29,327	112,804	794,127
January 2025	159,803	39,818	199,622	993,749
February 2025	202,120	48,111	250,231	1,243,980
March 2025	105,672	31,013	136,684	1,380,664
April 2025	144,161	48,524	192,685	1,573,349
May 2025	175,366	38,219	213,585	1,786,934
June 2025	42,560	51,834	94,393	1,881,328
Total	1,430,189	451,139	1,881,328	

2024 – 2025 IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

ARMSTRONG COUNTY

MONTH	HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START	Combined Total	24-25 Total
July 2024	36,902	9,817	46,719	46,719
August 2024	64,792	18,235	83,027	129,746
September 2024	142,842	19,484	162,326	292,073
October 2024	140,790	21,654	162,444	454,517
November 2024	113,790	16,862	130,652	585,169
December 2024	66,878	13,364	80,242	665,411
January 2025	167,520	23,034	190,554	855,965
February 2025	157,713	31,280	188,993	1,044,958
March 2025	130,602	26,978	157,,580	1,202,539
April 2025	87,499	12,115	99,614	1,302,153
May 2025	164,362	29,102	193,464	1,495,617
June 2025	39,974	4,781	44,846	1,540,462
Total	1,313,665	226,797	1,540,462	

HEALTH SERVICES REPORT 2024-2025 PROGRAM YEAR

Child's Health Status – Grantee agencies must ensure that all children have:

- An ongoing source of health care
- Up to date well checkups and immunizations
- A dental exam and follow-up treatment if necessary
- A visual and auditory screening (within 45 calendar days of entry into program – this may be completed by the child's pediatrician or at the agency)

HEALTH REPORT JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

HS/HSSAP/PRE-K/CC/ITCS – Total number of children served: 480

Number of children with:

- A source of ongoing health care – 333
- Up to date well checkups – 315
- Up to date immunizations – 310
- Exempt from immunizations – 8 for religious or moral reason
- Up to date dental exam – 322 ***39 of these children require follow-up care
- Total number of children who have been screened or attempted to screen:
 - Vision – 476 [throughout the program year] ***some parents refused
 - Hearing – 476 [throughout the program year] ***some parents refused

EHS – Total number of children served: 141

Number of children with:

- A source of ongoing health care – 128
- Up to date well checkups – 125
- Up to date immunization – 121
- Exempt from immunizations – 4
- Number of children who have been screened:
 - Vision – 131 ***some children were too young to screen / parents refused
 - Hearing – 131 ***some children were too young to screen / parents refused

Barriers:

- Continual decrease in number of dentists willing to see/treat children under the age of 5 years old
 - Early Learning Connections has relied on Golden Onsite Dental to provide mobile dental clinics in both counties to help ensure our children receive dental exams and cleanings
 - Several children require follow-up dental care
 - Follow-up care averages 9 months to be completed
 - PA Oral Health has stated that the situation will only continue to get more difficult as more dentists retire
- Increase in number of children needing glasses
 - Impact from increased screen time at younger ages
- We have seen an increase in the number of Special Health Care Plans / Medical Plans of Care

PRE-K COUNTS

Early Learning Connections' Pre-K Counts program operates during the academic school year of corresponding school districts:

- East Brady Community Center (Karns City SD)
- Dassa McKinney Elementary School (Moniteau SD)
- Glade Run Campus (Seneca Valley SD)
- South Buffalo Elementary School (Freeport SD)
- ELC's Bon Aire Building (Butler SD)

CLASSROOM	2024- 2025 ENROLLMENT
East Brady Community Center	16
Dassa McKinney Elementary	18
Zelienople - Glade Run Campus	16
South Buffalo Elementary School	18
Bon Aire	18
Total	86

- Early Learning Connections has served over 701 Pre-K students over 14 years
- Early Learning Connections' Pre-K Counts Head and Assistant Teachers have the following credentials:

- 4 Head Teachers hold a Pennsylvania Department of Education Level 2 Certification (1 Head Teacher is working toward their certification)
- Pre-K Counts teachers gather progress on each student throughout the school year:

<i>Social-Emotional</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>
<i>Physical</i>	<i>Science and Technology</i>
<i>Language</i>	<i>Social Studies</i>
<i>Cognitive</i>	<i>Arts</i>
<i>Literacy</i>	
- Information is obtained from child observations, portfolio work, and assessments
- Gathered information is used to plan children's individual goals
- Parent conferences are held 4 times throughout the school year
- Information that gathered is documented and reported to the state
- Each child in Pre-K Counts is given a unique identity number from the Department of Education; this number is used to follow each student's outcomes from preschool until 12th grade

CHILDCARE SERVICES

Committed to Quality

Early Learning Connections (ELC) operates a private, nonprofit licensed childcare program at the Bon Aire location. The childcare program adheres to all licensing regulations required by the state of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). The center has a strong commitment to providing high quality childcare services to children and families. This commitment is demonstrated by ongoing participation in Pennsylvania's quality rating and improvement system, Keystone STARS. The PA Positive Behavior Support Network has given all Early Learning Connections classrooms in Butler County official recognition for implementing Program Wide Positive Behavior Support with fidelity for the 2024-25 Program Year.

- ELC provided childcare services for 22 children ages 3-5 years old during the 2024-2025 program year
- 10 children ages 6 months-3 years old were served through the Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program
- ELC also provided preschool childcare before and after Head Start classroom hours as well as full day childcare on school vacation and in-service days

EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER (ELRC) REGION

3

Serving Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Indiana, and Lawrence Counties

Services for Families

ELRCs provide a single point of contact for families, early learning service providers, and communities to gain information and access services that support high-quality childcare and early learning programs.

- Services include:
 - Child Care Works (CCW), Pennsylvania's childcare subsidy program
 - Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania's quality improvement program for childcare providers
 - Administering Child Care and Early Learning Program Grants and Awards
 - Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program
 - Links and referrals to quality Child Care, Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Intervention Services

New ELRC 2025 – 2026 Initiatives

- Collaborate with the Rapid Response Team to help reduce suspension and expulsion of children in childcare settings for a one-year extension
- Administer the new 2025-26 Child Care Staff Retention and Recruitment Awards

- Administer Continuous Quality Improvement Grants in 2025-26
- Partner with Professional Development Organizations to continue to provide technical assistance in helping childcare workers attain higher educational levels and credentialing
- Provide additional programming to both families and providers focusing on the areas of mindfulness, behavioral health, and developmental supports

ELRC PROGRAM INFORMATION AND ESTIMATED DATA

JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

- **3,182 CCW estimated subsidized children enrolled 2024 -2025**
 - Help families pay for child care to maintain employment
 - Educate families on quality early education programs
 - Referral services (help find childcare and other services)
- **372 CCW estimated childcare provider sites paid in 2024 -2025**
 - 245 certified childcare providers and 127 relative providers
 - Total subsidy payments for 2024 – 2025: \$19,622,177
- **Grants and Awards 2024 – 2025**
 - Administered \$368,000 in funding for Continuous Quality Grants
 - Grants are focused on improving quality and stability of the childcare workforce
 - Administered \$471,000 in funding for the Start-up & Expansion Grants
 - This funding assists with the expansion of child care slots and availability

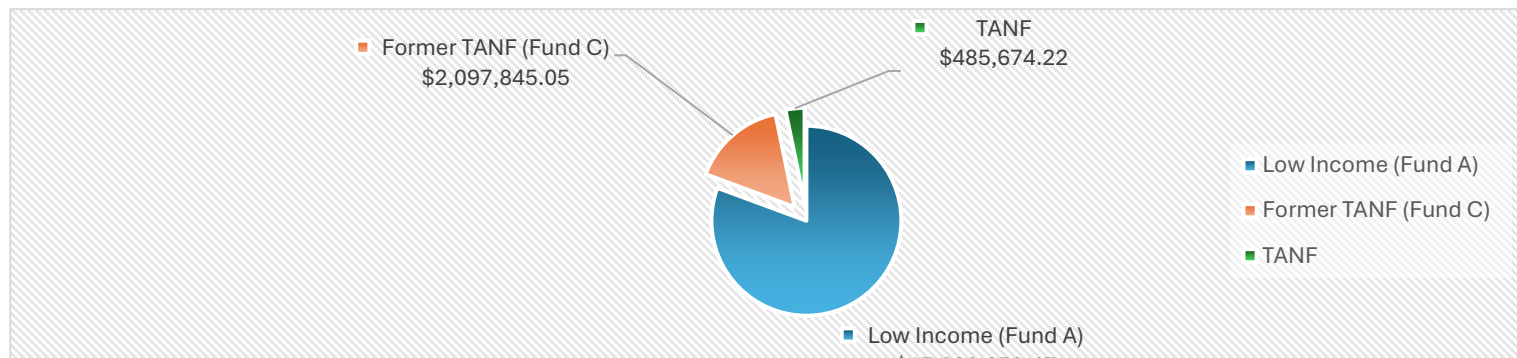
- **Infant Toddler Contracted Slots Program (ITCS)**

- Four ITCS sites in region 3 were awarded \$768,000.00 during 2024 -2025
- ITCS continues to focus on quality programming while building strong transitions from infant-toddler to pre-kindergarten classrooms
- ITCS serves up to 40 CCW eligible infants and toddlers

ELRC CHILDCARE SUBSIDY PAYMENTS BY FUND TYPE

JULY 1, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

FUNDING TYPE	AMOUNT PAID	PERCENTAGE
Low Income (Fund A)	\$17,038,658.47	87%
Former TANF (Fund C)	\$ 2,097,845.05	11%
TANF	\$ 485,674.22	2%
ELRC Total	\$19,622,177.74	100%



CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

- Early Learning Connections participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- CACFP is administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (federal) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (state)
- The program contributes to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of children in all Early Learning Connections programs
- Early Learning Connections receives reimbursement by adhering to regulations which are set forth by the CACFP:
 - We are required to provide annual training for all current staff as well as provide training for all new staff; this is completed at newcomers and welcome back events
 - We are required to monitor meals at all classroom sites three times per year; this is a combination of announced and unannounced visits
 - We are required to submit a monthly claim
 - We are required to pass an in-person evaluation every three years