



Bridges Head Start Program 2009-10 Annual Report

Ready, Set, Grow!

2009-2010 marked the second year of the Bridges Head Start program. The Parent-Child Development Corporation, grantee for the program, focused on developing new community partners in its expanded service area while strengthening program operations and services to a total of 236 young children and their families. The program benefited from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding that was used for upgrading the play yard at the Mathews center, staff training, and the implementation of the PROMIS technology-based record keeping and reporting system.

Bridges Head Start advances school readiness by promoting the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development of three- and four-year-old children. We provide educational, health and nutritional, social, and other activities to enrollees and their families. The program also engages parents in their children's learning and helps them to make progress toward their own literacy, educational, and vocational goals.

Bridges Head Start is funded to serve 216 children in eight rural Virginia localities. We operated ten centers four days a week in partnership with public school systems: five in Gloucester, two in King William, and one each in Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, and Charles City counties. One additional classroom is located at the Parent-Child Development Corporation's Tri-Rivers Center in West Point for children from West Point and King and Queen County. Children who are served at this location have the advantage of a full-year, full-day childcare program that meets the requirements of working parents who need assistance with childcare.

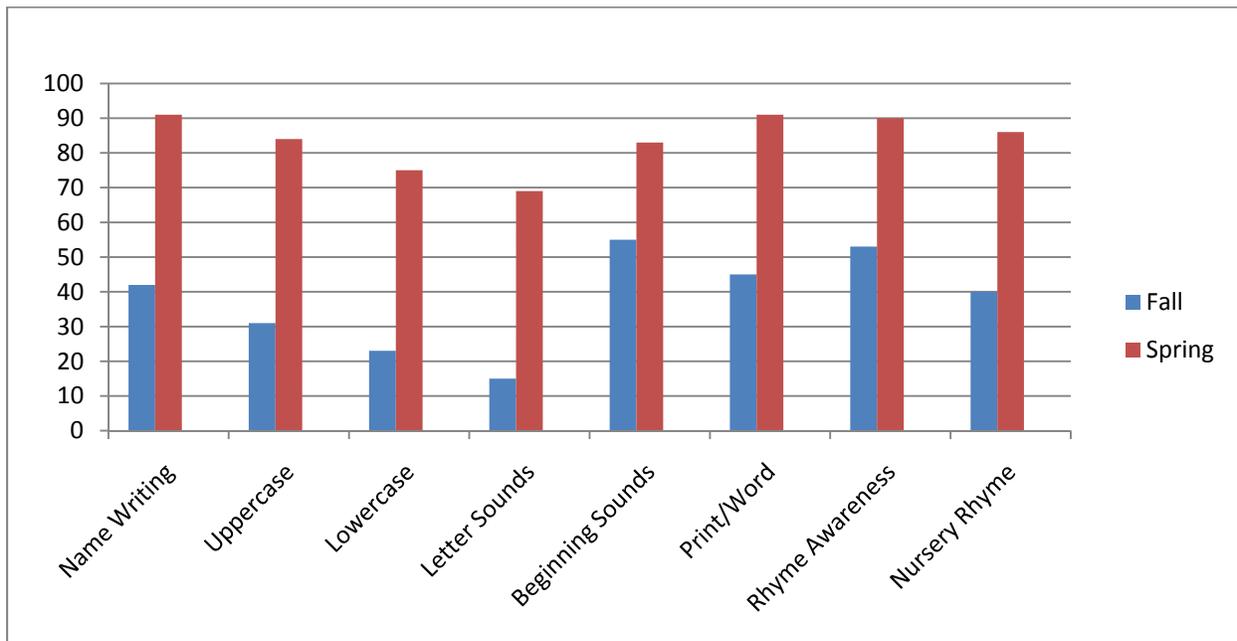
The program serves children who live at or below the federal poverty level, are homeless, on public assistance, and/or in foster care. At least ten percent of these children have diagnosed disabilities. In 2009-10 the program enrolled a total of 236 children and their families. Funded enrollment remained consistent throughout the program year.

Educational Services

Bridges Head Start utilizes the High/Scope Curriculum as a framework for its literacy-rich preschool education program. This curriculum is supplemented by the social-development component "Al's Pals," in which children are taught problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills. Healthy habits, nutritional guidance, and safety education are integrated into the daily routine. Each class has a rich supply of learning materials that reflect the cultural diversity of the children, are developmentally appropriate, and challenging.

Each child is screened with the Early Screening Instrument at the beginning of the school year to determine if the child has any delays. Referrals are made as needed. Children with identified disabilities are supported by the schools. Teachers use the Child Observation Record to document and assess each child's progress as well as to plan for individualized learning experiences. We also use the Pre-K PALS Assessment Tool to measure children's progress in letter recognition and phonological awareness.

**Pre-K PALS Fall and Spring Results
2009-2010**



Health and Nutrition Services

In partnership with parents, Bridges Head Start seeks to have all children medically insured, with a medical and dental "home," up-to-date immunizations, and physical and dental screenings. We work with parents and providers to schedule necessary follow-ups and treatment.

During the program year 100% of the children had a source of accessible health care.

At the end of the year

- 95% were up to date on a schedule of appropriate preventive and primary health care;
- 29% of the children had a chronic health condition and 91% of these children received medical treatment;
- 99% of the children had a source of continuous accessible dental care;
- 32% of the children needed dental treatment and 88% received treatment.

Mental health services are provided to children and their parents in collaboration with private and public providers. Children are served wholesome breakfasts, lunches, and snacks daily in accordance with USDA and Head Start guidelines.



Family Services and Parent Involvement

At Bridges Head Start we believe that parents are a child's first and most influential teachers. Family Services staff work together with parents to create compassionate partnerships that will benefit every child. We assess each family's strengths and needs and support the effort to provide a safe, positive, and nurturing environment for young children.

Sixty percent of the families we serve are headed by single parents. Bridges Head Start makes a special effort to support single parents, as well as families that have both parents in the home, by providing workshops, parenting materials, and individualized care from our teachers and family educators. Parents respond to these initiatives with deepening commitment to the Head Start program. The program also promotes the involvement of males in the lives of their children. We offer the *Coach Dads* program to fathers as well as other special activities for fathers and their children to *play* and learn together.

Parents volunteer in the classroom, accompany the children on field trips, and assist the grantee with office help or facility upkeep and repair. In the process, they establish relationships with other families and deeper connections with the community at large. In 2009-10, Bridges Head Start families contributed 13,839 hours of service; 2354 of these hours were logged by fathers and other male caregivers.

Parents whose children are enrolled in Bridges Head Start have many opportunities to participate in training activities, which may include health, safety, nutritional, and parenting topics. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in their child's classroom and may train to become substitutes.

Head Start parents are encouraged to develop their own literacy skills to support their child's education. The Families Reading Every Day (FRED) project promotes at-home reading for parents and children. We also participate in the Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) program and stress the value of ongoing learning through at-home activities during the school year and summer transition reading activities.

Staff members work with parents to identify family strengths and needs. Families are encouraged to set goals that will help them to achieve their dreams. Services provided to parents include emergency intervention, housing assistance, mental health services, ESL training, adult education, job training, substance abuse prevention, domestic violence and child support assistance, health education, assistance to incarcerated individuals, parenting and marriage education, and child abuse and neglect services. Two hundred twenty-three families received at least one of these services.



Liselle Saunders-Morning

The first thing that will happen when you meet Liselle is you will get a big hug. She is a warm and open woman who has had a remarkable odyssey. Born in the island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, Liselle was raised by "strict but loving" grandparents who offered her a "strong but not judgmental" religious upbringing. Grandfather was director of a railway who enjoyed growing flowers and listening to classical music. Yet, like most young people, Liselle was eager to leave this loving home and explore the wider world. Her travels took her to Boston, Massachusetts, where her father's family welcomed her to an unfamiliarly cold and snowy climate. Later, she settled on warm and sunny Tortola, in the British Virgin Islands, where she worked as a travel agent and restaurant manager while teaching tourists how to snorkel.

Liselle's odyssey took a different track when her five-year-old daughter Cheyanne was diagnosed with bilateral Perthes disease, a condition that destroys the hip joints. Because Cheyanne had been born in New York and therefore was an American citizen, Liselle was able to bring her to the United States for treatment, which involved two major surgeries. By the fall of 2004, Liselle was married to an American, living in Virginia, and in the process of adding another daughter to her family. The family grew in 2007, when Liselle's two younger sisters arrived in Virginia to pursue their education in America. Additionally, her teenaged stepson and niece joined her to make for a very full house.

Liselle's introduction to Head Start came when, pregnant with her third child, Kylina, she met Karen Bridges, family advocate for the Middlesex Center. Thanks to a grant supporting PCDC's Begin Educating Early (BEE) initiative, Karen was at a WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) clinic distributing free books for preschoolers and sharing information about Head Start. Intrigued by the program, Liselle was eager to enroll her son, Kyle.

As soon as Karen was gone, however, some women attending the clinic tried to dissuade Liselle, warning her that the Head Start people would pry into her private life. Liselle ignored their negative sentiments and says today that "My family has been richly blessed with the love and support given daily from this program." With Kyle attending class at the Middlesex Center, Liselle embraced Head Start's values and objectives. Because of her enthusiastic commitment to the program, Liselle was elected chair of the Bridges Head Start Policy Council in the fall of 2009.

"I'm getting stronger and more confident in myself," Liselle says of her Head Start experience. She sees her personal odyssey moving in the direction of a future career in social work or "anything working with kids." Head Start staff, Policy Council members, even federal reviewers have learned that when Liselle walks in, everyone gets a hug. And no one doubts her when she says, "It's genuine."



Community Partnerships

Local school divisions are vital partners in providing quality services to children and families. They provide classroom space, transportation, and cafeteria services for our students and joint staff development opportunities for our teachers. Local libraries, the YMCA, and civic organizations contribute to the program's success. Faith communities also play a significant role in supporting the Bridges Head Start program. In 2009-2010 the Urbanna United Methodist Church adopted the Middlesex Center and established a model for other

faith communities to follow. With financial support from community organizations the Head Start program offers a summer enrichment program for children entering Head Start and transitioning to kindergarten.



Staff Development

The Bridges Head Start program employs 42 full- and part-time staff. Each staff member has a professional development plan to guide in the advancement of skills and expertise. Staff members continue their education through college-level training; local, state, and national workshops and conferences; peer learning communities; and mentoring. Twenty-five percent of our staff members are current or former Head Start parents.



Jacqueline Forrer Wake

Jackie Wake's first contact with Head Start came in 2001, when she was looking at preschool options for her oldest daughter, who had just turned three. She met with Head Start veteran Linda Whitt, who at the time was family advocate for the Middlesex Center and now serves as lead teacher there. Jackie enrolled daughter Julianna in Head Start but soon became a single mom, working in a car dealership by day and driving from Middlesex County to Richmond at night, where she processed checks for the Federal Reserve Bank. Despite her punishing work schedule, Jackie became vice chair of the Head Start Policy Council that year and chaired it the following year.

Jackie left the car dealership and Federal Reserve to become a Head Start substitute teacher in the fall of 2003, supplementing that work with a job as a waitress. When she offered to assist PCDC as a receptionist at the Tri-Rivers Center in West Point, her work ethic earned her a position as a part-time administrative assistant. She also returned to school to pursue an associate's degree in early childhood education and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and psychology.

At that time, PCDC's Health Manager was Verlain Rilee. Jackie began assisting her with health, safety, and nutrition record keeping. By the time Verlain was ready to retire, Jackie, now beefing up her credentials with a Virginia Childcare Consultant Certificate, was ready to step into her role. Having completed four years as Health Manager and ERSEA [Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, Attendance] Coordinator for Bridges Head

Start, Jackie can resonate with the struggles of many families who enroll their children. "I know what it's like to depend upon Medicaid and food stamps," she says, "and I've learned the importance of education, not only for my children but for myself."

Jackie is not unique at Bridges Head Start, where several staff members are former Head Start parents who moved into positions of service and leadership. All display a special sensitivity as they work with Head Start families and encourage them to achieve as well. "I don't know where I'd be," says Jackie, "were it not for Head Start."

Now remarried, Jackie is grateful for the benefits she and her daughters have received from Head Start and for the opportunity to engage with other parents in situations similar to her own. Educational programs offered by PCDC and deepening relationships with parents and staff "helped me to be a better person," she says. As an active member of Urbanna United Methodist Church, Jackie has promoted partnerships between Bridges Head Start and faith communities throughout the seven-county service area. "It's everybody's responsibility to care for these children," she says. Jackie's enthusiasm and commitment were acknowledged in 2010 when she was elected chair of the Virginia Head Start Health Advisory Committee.



Policy Council

The Policy Council, composed of Head Start parents and community representatives, provides governance as it develops and approves policies, procedures, budgets, grant applications, and personnel recommendations. Parents are elected by their peers at Center Committee meetings. Monthly meetings provide the opportunity for parents to have an active role in developing and monitoring their program. Monthly leadership training prepares parents not only for service to Head Start but also to be decision makers in their community.

Board of Directors

Community members volunteer to serve on the Board of Directors of the Parent-Child Development Corporation. The Board of Directors has legal and fiduciary responsibility for all agency programs and takes an active role in providing oversight and guidance to Head Start. The agency has health, social services, and early childhood education advisory committees to guide program development and family access to services. At least one current or former Head Start parent serves on the Board of Directors.

Self-Assessment and Peer Review

As part of its commitment to quality, Bridges Head Start conducts an annual self-assessment to determine strengths and weaknesses in its program and management systems. Findings from the self-assessment and other data guide the program in developing short- and long-range goals and a continuous quality improvement plan. A follow-up peer review within the program year found that the program was in full compliance with Head Start standards. As a part of its ongoing supervision, the program uses the ECERS and CLASS evaluation tools to assess the learning environment and the quality of teacher-child interactions.

Funding and Budget

The Bridges Head Start program budget year is February 1 through January 31. The non-federal share is provided through support from school divisions' classroom space. During this period additional funding was awarded through the one-time ARRA grant. USDA revenue supports the children's meal service. The grantee's finances are audited annually by an independent accounting firm.

Bridges Head Start Fiscal Year September 1, 2009–August 31, 2010*		
Funding Source	Funds Received	Funds Expended
Federal Head Start	\$1,612,695	\$1,612,695
Federal Head Start (ARRA)	104,520	104,520
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	109,452	109,452
In-kind contributions	420,620	420,620
Totals	\$2,247,285	\$2,247,285

*These numbers have not been audited. Adjustments may be made in the final audit, to be completed by December 31, 2010.

The Parent-Child Development Corporation is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. PCDC's services are available without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or disability. The grantee's Head Start and administrative office is located at 702 Main St., P.O. Box 799, West Point, VA 23181. Our website may be accessed at www.pcdcva.org.