



**Early
Learning**
ESSENTIALS



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message From Our Executive Director	04
Message From Our Board Chair	05
About Early Learning Essentials	07
Being Good Stewards of Federal Funds	10
Enrollment	12
School Readiness	14
Health and Nutrition Services	19
Parent Engagement & Family Outcomes	22
Mental Health Outcomes	25
Community Partners	26

Message From Our Executive Director

I am more than pleased to share this Annual Report with our community.

This report documents accomplishments of the organization in the 2023-24 school year. Behind every activity, every milestone reached, every success, there are the efforts of very dedicated hard-working staff. We recognize our staff are our greatest asset and we continue to support them to do their best work on behalf of those we serve. However, it is not our accomplishment alone. We thank all who have contributed to our success. We enjoy the support of a volunteer Board of Directors as well as engaged parents and community representatives on our Policy Council. There are also many community and parent volunteers and community partners that contribute to our overall collective impact.

Most of our clients experience the effects and impacts of poverty, trauma, and housing insecurity. However, when children and parents are empowered with knowledge and skills, supported to believe in their potential and have access to necessary basic needs, we envision that there will be more healthy children and families in our community that are thriving and engaged in lifelong learning.

We engaged in several transformational activities during the last school year including the introductory roll-out of the Pyramid Model. The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development. We are in alignment with the Pyramid Model emphasis to promote the social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of all children and those which are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

The journey ahead contains immense possibilities as we work on our mission and vision. So, in the years ahead, we will continue to draw upon the power of community and collaboration to tackle the challenges that come our way as we have always done in the last 46+ years of our history.

Fondly,
Sonia Pineda, Executive Director



Message From Our Board Chair



I am grateful to be able to see what people can do to make changes in the lives of other people. Early Learning Essentials is all about people, I love hearing the stories of the difference that has been made with the children and families that are served by Early Learning Essentials. Those changes are made possible by the employees and volunteers that work for and with Early Learning Essentials. Without these people, those amazing stories would not exist. I often wonder what the positive future effects of Early Learning Essentials will be, what difference will be made in the world because people decided to serve these children and give them opportunities that they may not have been able to receive another way. We may never know what the effects will be in the future but I am grateful for those that are willing to serve, sacrifice and put in the effort to show love for other people, it is not easy, but it may be worth it .

I am grateful to witness the many unique contributions by Early Learning Essentials and the many community partners that invest in the life of each child. Together, amazing things can happen in the life of each child and family! I am grateful to be associated with such a fantastic organization!

Sincerely,
Chris Hansen
Board Chair



Early Learning Essentials

Early Learning Essentials. (ELE), also known as Mountainland Head Start, Inc is a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit organization based out of Provo, Utah. Our mission is Empowering Young Children and Families Along a Path to Achieve Their Highest Potential. We accomplish this by administering a Head Start program in Juab, Utah, and Wasatch Counties, and an Early Head Start Program in Juab County and south Utah county. These programs are funded through a federal grant with a 20% community support match. We are funded to serve 575 children and families in our Head Start program and 12 children/pregnant mothers in our Early Head Start program, for a total of 587 children.

ELE takes a two-generational approach to alleviating poverty in our community. We provide high-quality preschool services for 3 and 4-year-olds focusing on cognitive, physical and social/emotional development. We also provide social support services to the families, with particular focus on financial well-being, parenting, and promoting child development in the home.

Being Good Stewards of Federal Funds

As a recipient of federal funds, Mountainland Head Start, operating as Early Learning Essentials, acknowledges the significant trust placed in our organization by taxpayers. We are committed to upholding this trust through rigorous monitoring practices, continuous efforts to enhance operational efficiency, and proactive measures to minimize waste.

During the 2023-24 school year, Early Learning Essentials received a Focus Area #2 federal review by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Based on the information gathered during this review, we are pleased to report that our program was found to receive just one small finding dealing with a missing federal interest posting in one of our locations. Other than that, our agency met the requirements of all applicable Head Start Performance Standards, or Public Law 110-134, Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, as well as other applicable laws, regulations and policy requirements.

Annual Independent Audit Results

For the fiscal year ending April 30, 2024 an audit was conducted by Squire & Company, PC. We are happy to report our audit had no findings. The auditor's report expressed an unmodified opinion on the financial statements of the organization. They reported there were no deficiencies nor material weaknesses in internal control over financial reporting. Additionally, they did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over compliance that would be a material weakness based on the requirements of 2 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance).

In-Kind Non-Federal Share

For the fiscal year 2023-2024, our federal requirements for in-kind/non-federal contributions—comprising donations, volunteer time, supplies, and the value of donated classroom sites—totaled \$2,093,616. Thanks to the generosity of our dedicated parent volunteers, community members, local businesses, and partners, we successfully surpassed our non-federal match goals. The required federal match amount was \$1,673,981.

*Full financial statements and the 990 are available upon request.

TOTAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS RECEIVED 2023-2024

Head Start Grant	\$ 9,060,499
Head Start Training Grant	\$ 81,469
Head Start Grant Total	\$ 9,141,968
Cash Contributions	\$ 12,752
Other Revenue	\$ 12,258
Contributions/Income	\$ 25,010
Child Care Food Program	\$ 473,346
Total	\$ 473,346
Head Start Grand Total	\$ 9,640,324

2023-2024 MOUNTAINLAND HEAD START BUDGET

Personnel	\$ 5,597,274
Fringe Benefits	\$ 1,868,191
Travel	\$ 25,000
Equipment	\$ 122,000
Supplies	\$ 212,612
Contractual	\$ 327,452
Construction	\$ -
Other	\$ 907,970
Training	\$ 81,469
Total	\$ 9,141,968

2023-2024 MOUNTAINLAND HEAD START EXPENDITURE

Personnel	\$ 5,347,830
Fringe Benefits	\$ 1,690,024
Travel	\$ 24,703
Equipment	\$ 122,006
Supplies	\$ 253,255
Contractual	\$ 376,654
Construction	\$ -
Other	\$ 1,174,511
Training	\$ 81,469
Child Care Food Program	\$ 569,872
Total	\$ 9,640,324

NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO PROVIDED VOLUNTEER SERVICES 2023-2024

Parents/Former Head Start Parent	653
Community Volunteers	881
Total	1534

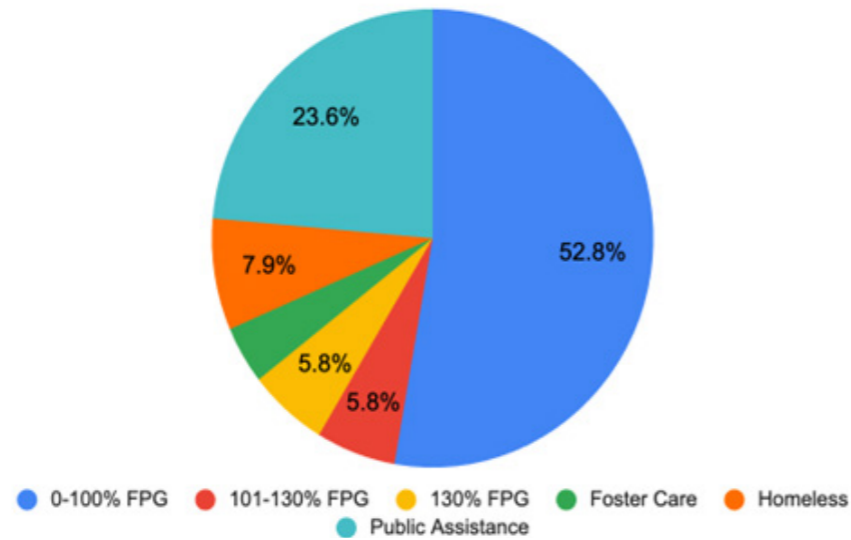
PROPOSED 2024-2025 MOUNTAINLAND HEAD START BUDGET

Personnel	\$ 5,597,274
Fringe Benefits	\$ 1,868,191
Travel	\$ 25,000
Equipment	\$ -
Supplies	\$ 212,612
Contractual	\$ 327,452
Construction	\$ -
Other	\$ 907,970
Training	\$ 81,469
Total	\$ 9,019,968

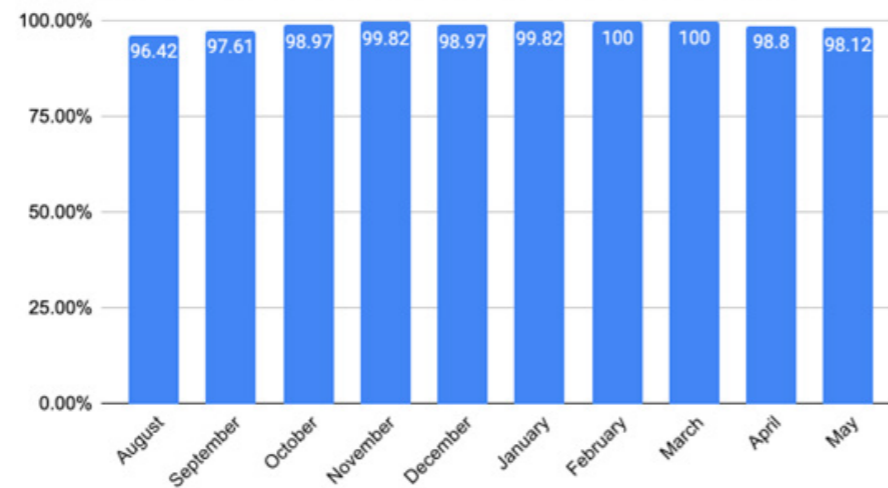
Enrollment

ELE had a very exciting school year, successfully opening all classrooms and enrolling children to full capacity. This year, ELE served a total of 683 children from 628 families through our Head Start and Early Head Start programs. To the right is a breakdown of the income eligibility statuses for all enrolled children in these programs.

Income Eligibility 2023-24



Average Enrollment as a Percent of Funded Enrollment



The program aims to keep full enrollment throughout the year. With the exception of August, we successfully maintained enrollment at or above 97% of available slots for the entire school year. Our average monthly enrollment for the year as a percentage of funded enrollment was 98.7%. The chart to the right displays the monthly enrollment for each month of the school year.

In our service area there are an estimated 5,748 children birth to four years old who are living below the federal poverty guidelines. Based upon that estimate from the US Census Bureau, we estimate that Early Learning Essentials served 11.9% of income and age eligible children.



School Readiness and Preparing Children for Kindergarten

At Early Learning Essentials, we are dedicated to preparing every child for a bright academic future, providing them with the tools they need to succeed in school and life. Our mission focuses on nurturing the full developmental potential of each child, ensuring they are fully ready for kindergarten and beyond. We believe that by fostering a love for learning and providing high-quality early education, we can positively impact the lives of both children and their families, giving them the confidence and skills needed for future achievements.

Our approach to kindergarten readiness is built on five key developmental domains, which are critical for fostering school success:

- Approaches to learning: Encouraging curiosity, initiative, and a love for learning.
- Social and emotional development: Helping children build self-regulation, social skills, and emotional resilience.
- Language and literacy: Strengthening communication skills and early literacy foundations.
- Cognitive development: Promoting problem-solving skills and critical thinking
- Perceptual motor and physical development: Supporting physical health, coordination, and fine and gross motor skills.

At ELE, we believe in establishing a comprehensive foundation for each child's school readiness. To achieve this, we implement the Creative Curriculum, an evidence-based framework that is specifically designed for children ages 3 to 5 and is fully aligned with the Utah Core Standards for Early Learning. This curriculum celebrates children's natural curiosity and encourages active exploration, providing a holistic approach to learning. It is carefully structured around engaging, thematic units that encompass every aspect of a child's development, from social-emotional growth and academic skills to physical development and language acquisition.



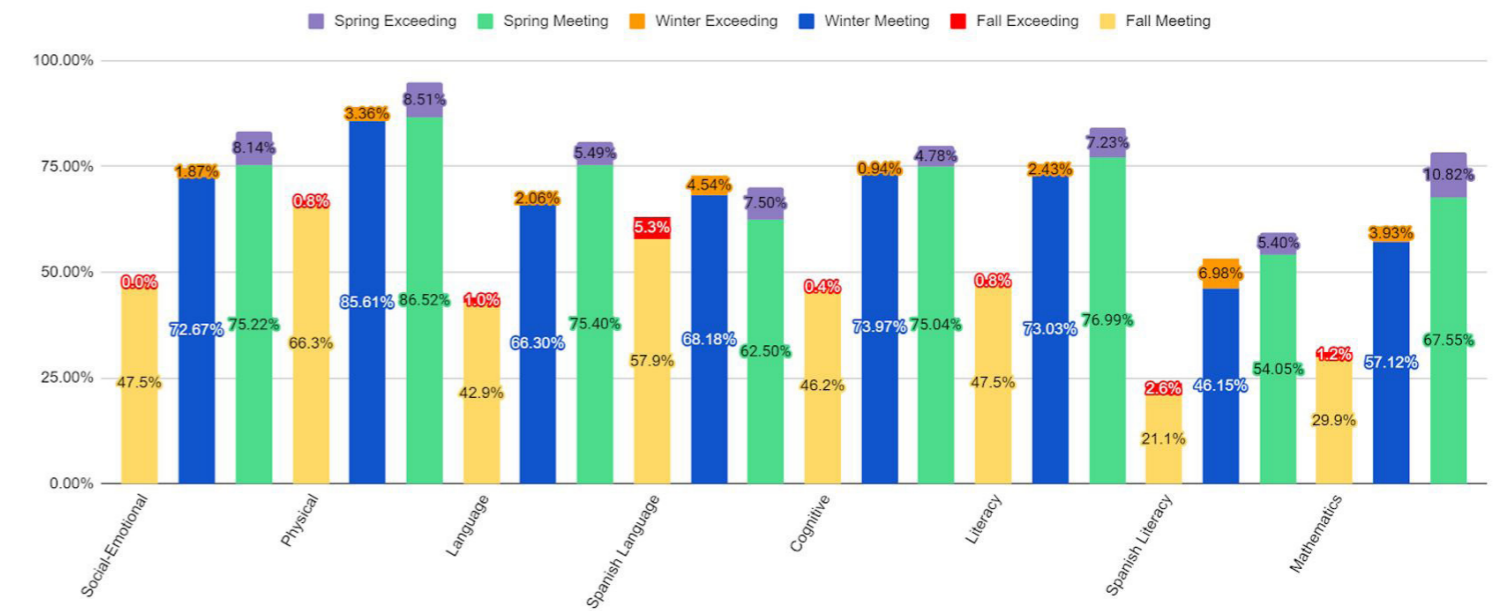
In addition to the Creative Curriculum, we integrate Conscious Discipline, a proven methodology that addresses the unique developmental needs of each child. Conscious Discipline offers practical tools and strategies for creating a safe, nurturing environment where children can thrive emotionally, socially, and academically. Together, these two programs work hand in hand to provide an individualized and well-rounded learning experience, supporting the diverse needs of every child and ensuring they are fully prepared for the next step in their educational journey.

ELE consistently tracks progress toward school readiness goals and uses this data to enhance our proven practices. Our Head Start program establishes specific goals for each child's development across 12 key areas, measuring growth through 99 dimensions. This progress is carefully monitored through ongoing observations and the use of the research-based assessment tool, "Teaching Strategies Gold." Data is collected at three checkpoints throughout the year, providing a clear picture of each child's progression.



Head Start defines school readiness as the skills and knowledge children need to be successful in school and in life. By using a research-based curriculum with a clear scope and sequence, and by implementing this curriculum with fidelity, we ensure that every child is both emotionally and academically prepared for kindergarten. Our goal is for children to leave Head Start with confidence and a positive attitude toward school, setting them up for success in kindergarten and beyond. We also credit our success in School Readiness to our dedicated staff, who work hard to provide high-quality teaching and create the best possible learning experiences for the children and families we serve.

Overall Program 2023-2024



Above you will find a graph that illustrates the developmental progress our Head Start children achieved during the 2023-2024 school year, from fall to spring. For those transitioning to kindergarten, we observed growth in every domain. The most significant growth occurred in the Mathematics domain, with 29.9% of children meeting expectations in the fall, and by spring, outcomes were at 67.55% meeting and 10.82% exceeding expectation, indicating a remarkable growth.

The second-highest growth was in the Literacy domain, with 47.5% meeting expectations in the fall and 76.99% meeting these expectations by spring, reflecting a growth of 29.49%.



Health and Nutrition

Services

At Early Learning Essentials, we understand that healthy children are better able to engage in learning, which allows them to get more out of the educational opportunities presented to them. With that in mind, our Health Services team collaborated with Head Start families and health professionals within our community to ensure the children we served during the 2023-2024 school year were up-to-date on a schedule of well child checks and preventive care including immunizations as well as annual physical and dental exams.

This year we dealt with ongoing increased student absenteeism as well as parental resistance in meeting health requirements and an increase in the numbers of children who are not eligible for health or dental insurance programs. Despite the challenges, the Health Services staff were successful in partnering with the vast majority of parents and health professionals in preparing the children to be physically ready for kindergarten.

2023-2024 Enrollment Numbers Related to Health Results	
Children who were enrolled at least one day	683
Children who were enrolled less than 45 days	38
Children who were enrolled less than 90 days	74

Of the Children Enrolled at least 1 day	Number	Percentage
Children with up to date immunizations	680	99%
Children with medical homes	669	98%
Children with an annual physical exam	662	97%
Children with dental homes	658	96%
Children with an annual dental exam	656	96%

Nutrition Services

Meal time at Early Learning Essentials is an extension of the classroom wherein children learn gross and fine motor skills, table manners, social skills, and many other self-help skills to prepare them for school. Each day, children are offered a nourishing breakfast, lunch and snack that is prepared and served on-site. Menus and recipes are created by a registered dietitian and follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern. Meals served are planned to be colorful, delicious, and nutritious in order to foster the appropriate growth and development of the children. Each week includes a culturally diverse meal to help children try new and interesting foods they may have never had before. The menu offers a variety of fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, lean meats and dairy, and whole grains. We look forward to continuing to develop menu items to provide good nutrition to our children.

Each meal is being served in the classroom. There are three sites (Orem to Aspen, Lehi to Saratoga Springs, and Springville to Spanish Fork) where food is transported from one location to the other. This way all the children can have hot lunches.



During the program year, 70.5 % of children who had growth assessments were classified as healthy weight, 2.7% were underweight, 15% were overweight and 11.8% were classified as obese based on the BMI-for-age growth charts. These figures are slightly less than national averages. According to the 2011 Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System data, nearly one third of children aged two to four were overweight or obese.[1], 2 Early Learning Essentials takes every effort to contribute to childhood obesity prevention by providing foods that are high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar and salt.

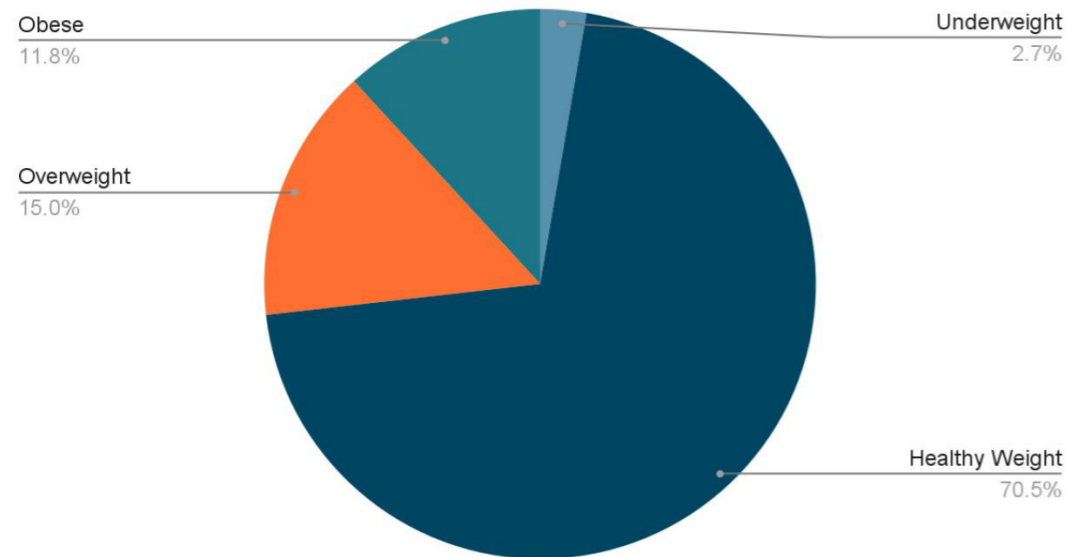
Newsletter articles were sent to parents emphasizing the importance of healthy foods and family meals, and recipes for healthy Early Learning Essentials meals were provided for parents. Additionally, one home visit included a discussion of the child's growth chart. Families were given a nutrition handout that corresponded with their child's BMI. Families were also able to learn about good nutrition practices at Parent Meetings. Families have the option of meeting with a registered dietitian for nutrition consultations if desired.

[1]<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/pednssfactsheet.pdf>

[2]<http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/prevention/nutrition/pednss/2011/table12c.htm>

Childhood Obesity

BMI for 2023-2024



Parent Engagement and Family Outcomes

Early Learning Essentials (ELE) is dedicated to supporting families in seven key areas: family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, families as learners, families as lifelong educators, parent engagement in transitions, connections to peers and the community, and families as advocates and leaders. A key strategy to achieve these goals is through activities that actively involve parents with our program and their children. ELE also places a strong emphasis on parent engagement, including father involvement, to enhance positive outcomes for children and support parents during their children's transition to elementary school.

This year, we offered numerous activities to engage parents with their families and with other parents at ELE. We conducted two sessions of a 2-week (3 hours per week) parenting course called Conscious Discipline Parenting Curriculum, and provided literacy and math programs for fathers/males under the DUDEs (Dads United, Dads Engaged) initiative. This included DUDEs Read and DUDEs Math programs, along with monthly DUDE activities and bi-monthly parent training and family events. Some of the DUDEs and family activities we organized included:

- Nurturing Fathers class
- Fall festival activities at various locations (donated by Thanksgiving Point Heber Valley Railroad, Wilkerson Farm, and Ranch Farms)
- Family Game night (MILO math games donated by STEM Action Center)
- End of Year Carnival
- Kindergarten transition Fairs with Alpine, Nebo, Provo, Wasatch and Juab school districts to help parents and children make a successful transition

Family Advocates worked closely with families throughout the year to help them achieve their goals in the seven key areas mentioned earlier. They guided families through a process of self-assessment, goal setting, and follow-up. Additionally, referrals to other agencies and programs were provided to help parents access the resources needed for success.



Family Outcome Measurement Results

We track progress using our Family Outcomes Measurement tool, which assesses families' status in these areas on a 1-5 scale—1 being in crisis, 3 being stable with support, and 5 being self-sufficient. 583 families who took the assessment at least twice and 366 (63%) demonstrated a significant gain in their scores. Below are the average improvements in each domain for those families whose scores increased.

Location	Families	Assessment	Employment	Money Management	Food Security	Nutrition	Housing	Home Safety	Clothing	Health	Mental Health	Substance Use (inc tobac	Discipline & Parenting Ski	Understanding Child Dev
Early Learning Essentials	366	1	3.4	3.8	3.9	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.9	4.2	4.4
	342	2	4	4	4.3	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.9	4.3	4.5
	319	3	4.2	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.8	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.5	5	4.5	4.6
	366	+/-	▲ 0.7	▲ 0.5	▲ 0.5	▲ 0.4	▲ 0.4	▲ 0.1	▲ 0.3	▲ 0.5	▲ 0.1	▲ 0	▲ 0.2	▲ 0.2

Male Involvement	Quality Individual Time	Education in the Home	Parent Teaching Skills	Reading with Children	Communication with Teac	Parent Education Level	English Language Skills	Parent Literacy in Primary	Kindergarten Transition	Communication with Child	Public School Grading Sy	Positive & Healthy Relatio	Community Support Netw	Volunteering	Issues Impacting Children	Representing Children	Involvement in Parent	TOTAL
4.4	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.2	4	4.9	3.9	3.5	3.8	4.6	3.9	3.5	4.4	4.7	3.3	124.
4.6	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.3	4	4.9	4.1	3.8	4	4.6	4.1	3.7	4.5	4.8	3.5	130.
4.6	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.2	4.9	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.8	4.5	3.9	4.8	4.9	3.8	135.
▲ 0.2	▲ 0.2	▲ 0.3	▲ 0.4	▲ 0.3	▲ 0.4	▲ 0.3	▲ 0.2	▲ 0.1	▲ 0.6	▲ 0.8	▲ 0.5	▲ 0.2	▲ 0.6	▲ 0.4	▲ 0.4	▲ 0.1	▲ 0.5	▲ 10.5

Family Success Story

To view a video highlighting the successes that ELE had working with parents and children please use the QR code to the right. We thank the Watson family for allowing us to share their story.



Mental Health Outcomes

Head Start performance standards state that programs are required to ensure that at least 10% of enrollment slots are occupied by children with disabilities. The Disabilities and Mental Health (DMH) team was able to help maintain this requirement last year by working closely with the enrollment team and nearby school districts. We had a total of 124 students enrolled with an IEP. Of these students 82 were diagnosed with speech and language delays, 41 were diagnosed as non-categorical, and 1 student was diagnosed with a health impairment.

The DMH team completed developmental screenings for each first-year student who attended ELE. These screenings are designed to identify concerns regarding a student's developmental, behavioral, motor, language, social, cognitive, and emotional skills. These screenings must be completed within 45 calendar days of when the child first attends the program. The DMH team was able to complete 413 developmental screenings during the 2023-2024 school year. Of these, 129 students had a concern monitored in class. If a child is being monitored in class, the DMH team will gather data and determine if a referral to the school district is necessary.

Working with our school districts, the DMH team referred 82 students for evaluation at one of our school districts. Of these referred students, 68 received an evaluation. 40 were diagnosed, and 26 weren't diagnosed. Four students weren't evaluated due to parental denial.

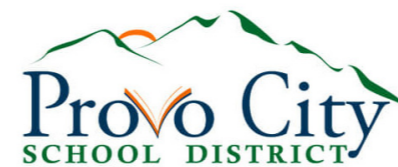
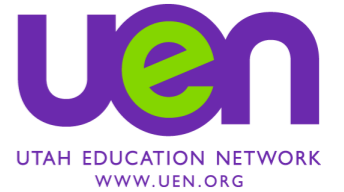
The Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE) is a tool used to evaluate a child's social-emotional development. Last school year, a total of 635 ASQ:SE were filled out by parents.

The DMH team continued to be a support to the students, families, teaching staff and staff working at the centers throughout the school year by coaching and modeling different behavior techniques and strategies for working with challenging students. DMH continued to use school district resources and multiple external mental health consultants to serve our students attending ELE.

Community Partners

ELE believes that collaboration with community agencies facilitates the possibility of collective impact and builds positive relationships that support parents' progress toward their goals for themselves and their children. We cannot achieve success alone. Our community partners provide culturally and linguistically responsive services and helpful resources to work with families on such goals as parents' educational advancement, economic mobility, and other aspects of family well-being. Some of our strongest partners include:

- Alpine, Provo, Nebo, Juab, Wasatch School Districts
- BYU Comprehensive Clinic
- Circles of Utah County
- Community Action and Food Bank
- Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS)
- Department of Workforce Services (DWS)
- Deseret Industries
- Family Haven
- Google Fiber
- Help Me Grow Utah
- Housing Authority of Utah County
- Kids On The Move
- Latino Mental Health Behavioral Services
- Nurturing Fathers Program
- Tabitha's Way Food Pantry
- Thanksgiving Point
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
- United Way of Utah County
- Utah Health Department
- Utah Transit Authority (UTA)
- Vroom (Envision Utah)
- Wasatch Mental Health
- Waterford Upstart





A special thanks to all of our Staff, Parents, Board Members, Policy Council, Volunteers, and Community Partners who make our mission and vision a reality.



264 West 300 North
Provo, Utah 84601



(801) 375-7981



www.eleutah.org