

TULSA EDUCARE

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome to Tulsa Educare's 2025-2026 Annual Report



What a year of progress for Tulsa Educare! In 2025–26, preschool children in our four Educare schools achieved their highest spring language scores in four years and demonstrated improved growth. Infant-toddler language scores also reached their highest level since the current assessment version was introduced in 2022–23. These results reflect our sustained commitment to supporting children's language development.

Our impact extends beyond our schools. Children served through our formal agreements with 21 child care providers made encouraging progress in developmental outcomes. Separately, we completed a project to improve health, safety, and learning environments at 44 licensed child care locations across Tulsa. Improvements included flooring, windows, outdoor play equipment, children's furniture, and educational materials.

We were proud to host the Educare Network's annual national Summit, welcoming more than 300 early childhood professionals, partners, and funders to Tulsa. The gathering brought together members of the national network of 25 Educare schools to share ideas and advance early childhood education.

We also invested in improving the systems that support our work. We began using new financial software with enhanced functionality and used automation to streamline purchasing, benefits enrollment, performance management, and child meal-count processes. These efforts are helping us modernize administrative processes and better support our staff and programs.

On the next page, you'll find an overview of our strategic plan, followed by a page describing our priority population and the children we reach. The report then highlights new initiatives, emerging efforts, and "aha" moments across our strategic goal areas.

We have much to celebrate, much to learn, and important work ahead. Thank you for being part of Tulsa Educare's commitment to young children, families, and our community.

C L Decker

CINDY DECKER

Executive Director, Tulsa Educare

TULSA EDUCARE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029

OUR VISION

A world where a young child's family income, race, and adverse experiences do not predict life success

OUR MISSION

To transform lives through high-quality early childhood education, meaningful family engagement, and impactful early learning supports

OUR GOALS

EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS

AMPLIFIED IMPACT

ENGAGED CHILDREN



Nurture children's innate curiosity and love of learning through intentional environments anchored in play, equity, exploration, and meaningful relationships

CONNECTED FAMILIES



Collaborate with families to support parent-child relationships, foster a strong school-home partnership, and build on existing strengths and skills to enhance family wellbeing

HEALTHY SCHOOLS



Operate supportive, efficient, and sustainable environments that promote growth and cultivate a culture of teamwork and continuous improvement

SUPPORTED COMMUNITY



Provide caregivers and other adults in Tulsa beyond our schools with knowledge, resources, and opportunities to further spark children's growth and development

FURTHER INFLUENCE



Impact the early learning system through research, advocacy, shaping discussions, educating funders and leaders, and influencing public policies

OUR VALUES

LEARNING



RELATIONSHIPS



COMMITMENT

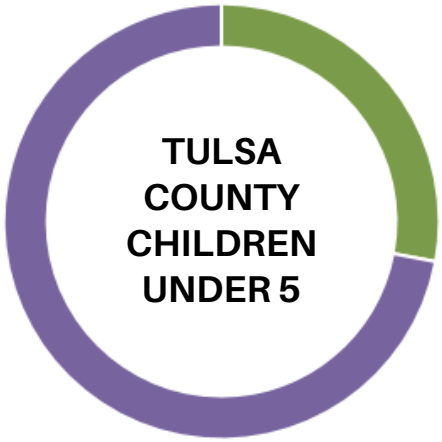


DATA



OUR PRIORITY POPULATION

Our program supports families navigating economic challenges and those children benefiting from individualized services. Our priority population is the estimated 12,147 children under five in Tulsa County whose families are facing economic barriers. These children live in households with income under 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) and comprise twenty-eight percent of all children under five living in Tulsa County. For a household of three in 2026, this means an annual income under $35,516. We estimate that of the 12,147 children living in households with income under 130% of FPL, 7,288 are under three and, therefore, eligible for Early Head Start in Tulsa County.



28%, 12,147
LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME UNDER 130% OF FPL

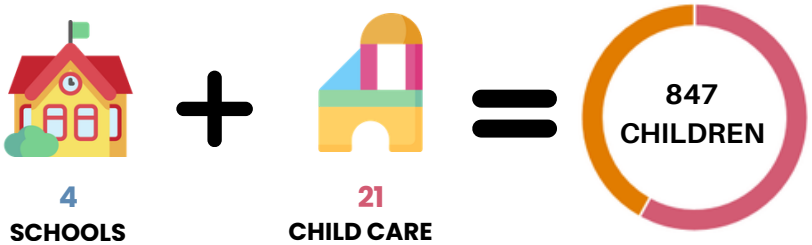
72%, 31,326
LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS WITH INCOME OVER 130% OF FPL

Data from 2024 American Community Survey

NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED

Tulsa Educare proudly served 656 children in our Educare schools, uplifted quality for another 191 children at our child care partner locations, and extended our impact even further by reaching over 1,000 additional children through community programming.

Of the 847 children in our schools and child care partnerships, more than half of these children—492, or 58%—are supported through Early Head Start funding. Given we estimate 7,288 children in Tulsa County are eligible for Early Head Start, Tulsa Educare is reaching about 7% of them.



58%, 492
EARLY HEAD START

42%, 355
NON-EARLY HEAD START



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Tulsa Educare will nurture children's innate curiosity and love of learning through intentional environments anchored in play, equity, exploration, and meaningful relationships.

Since 2023, we have prioritized strengthening preschool quality through inquiry-based learning, small-group experiences, intentional environments, responsive support for children's learning and behavior, and an updated child assessment system. Mentor Coaches and expert pedagogical consultants strengthen teaching practices, while Mental Health Specialists partner with teachers and families to address children's social-emotional needs. We also work to maintain a percentage of filled preschool teacher positions comparable to that of our mixed-age infant-through-3-year-old classrooms. These efforts are showing promising results. In Spring 2026, average Preschool Language Scale (PLS) scores reached their highest level in four years, an encouraging sign that investments in teaching practices and emergent literacy are making a difference.

> **"I've seen so much progress in my kids—from their language skills to social interaction—and it's all thanks to the love and support they received here."**
> **Tulsa Educare Parent**







In 2025–26, Tulsa Educare strengthened social-emotional development through the evidence-based Pyramid Model. Expert trainers provided training in Modules 1 and 2 to all teachers, building skills to foster nurturing relationships, supportive environments, positive guidance, and children's social-emotional growth. Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness staff visited classrooms and provided feedback to support implementation. Each school has a Pyramid Model committee of staff and parents to promote consistent practices across classrooms.







Rapid-cycle feedback uses objective classroom observation data to help teachers reflect and make timely improvements. In 2025–26, Tulsa Educare piloted this approach in mixed-age infant-through-3-year-old classrooms. The day after each observation, University of Oklahoma Early Childhood Education Institute (OU-ECEI) observers met with teachers and their Mentor Coach to discuss results and strengthen interactions, learning experiences, and classroom environments.



Tulsa Educare will collaborate with families to support parent-child relationships, foster a strong school-home partnership, and build on existing strengths and skills to enhance family wellbeing.

Tulsa Educare supports families in pursuing goals they identify for themselves, building on their strengths and priorities to enhance family well-being. To support families without directing their choices, Family Advocates use Motivational Interviewing, an evidence-based, person-centered approach that helps families recognize their own reasons for change, build confidence, and take steps toward their goals. In 2025–26, Family Advocates deepened their training and practice in this approach. Through supportive conversations, active listening, and ongoing follow-up, they encouraged families to build on their strengths, navigate challenges, and adjust plans as needed.

All families (100%) set at least one goal, and 68% completed at least one goal during the year. Nearly half chose goals related to parenting education, while another 22% focused on their own education.

> They are very kind and dedicated to what they do, and they have personally been a great support to me.
> Their events are fantastic!
> Tulsa Educare Parent







Families are essential partners in strengthening the connection between home and school. Each school's Parent Committee brings parents and staff together to strengthen family engagement and create opportunities for families to contribute their strengths, ideas, and leadership. Every committee planned at least one event, from classroom activities like read-alouds and cultural food experiences to larger school celebrations. Parents also successfully advocated for speed bumps in a school parking lot, demonstrating how family voices and collaboration can lead to meaningful improvements in their school communities.

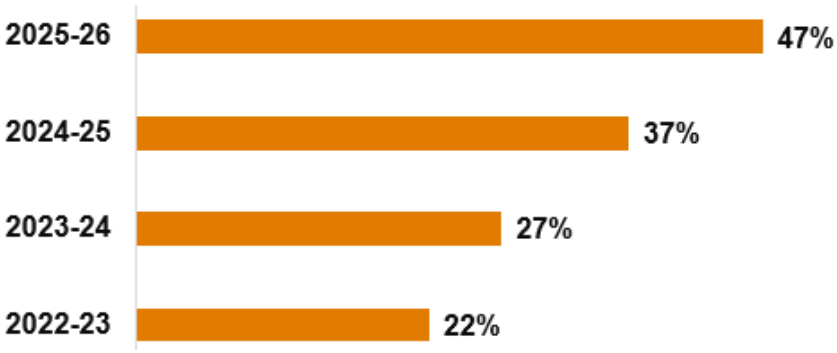


Tulsa Educare partnered with Birthright Living Legacy to strengthen our relationship with fathers and support their relationship with their children. Approximately 40 dads participated, connecting with other fathers and building community. When fathers thrive, families flourish.

Strong parent-child relationships support children's learning and strengthen family well-being. Tulsa Educare encourages families to build on everyday opportunities for connection through conversations, reading, and storytelling. The percentage of parents reporting that they told their child stories six to seven times in the past week more than doubled, rising from 22% in 2022–23 to 47% in 2025–26. This progress highlights how everyday interactions can nurture parent-child relationships and support children's language development.



Parent told child stories 6-7 times in past week





Tulsa Educare will operate supportive, efficient, and sustainable environments that promote growth and cultivate a culture of teamwork and continuous improvement.

In 2026, we created and launched the Classroom Stability and Support System to strengthen child safety and well-being through consistent practices in active supervision, safe transitions between spaces, positive guidance, and staff regulation. More frequent leadership walkthroughs, formal observations, and video reviews, along with timely follow-up, help identify concerns early and reinforce safe, stable classrooms. We also introduced Tap Out, Step In procedures that encourage staff to seek support and respond constructively, promoting self-regulation and teamwork. Together, these efforts foster accountability and continuous improvement, with child safety at the center.

We also strengthened processes for completing health and developmental screenings within 45 days of enrollment. By year-end, we achieved 100% compliance with hearing, vision, Ages & Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3), and ASQ Social-Emotional (ASQ) screenings—a significant improvement over the previous year. Timely screenings help identify children who may benefit from early intervention and connect families with needed resources.







In 2025–26, an average of 94% of Tulsa Educare positions were filled—the highest rate since tracking began. Average monthly teacher openings declined from 15 to 12. However, staffing stability depends on both filling positions and ensuring teachers are present consistently to support children's learning and well-being. We implemented a revised staff attendance policy and monitoring tool to better understand attendance patterns, strengthen accountability, and support improvement.



> **Tulsa Educare cares about their employees, and the employees care about each other.**
> **Tulsa Educare Teacher**





Strong leadership is essential to building a positive workplace culture where staff feel supported, valued, and empowered to thrive. All 24 members of school leadership completed *Managing to Change the World* training and participated in small-group reflection sessions to deepen their understanding and translate key concepts into their day-to-day leadership practices.



Tulsa Educare will provide caregivers and other adults in Tulsa beyond our schools with knowledge, resources, and opportunities to further spark children's growth and development.

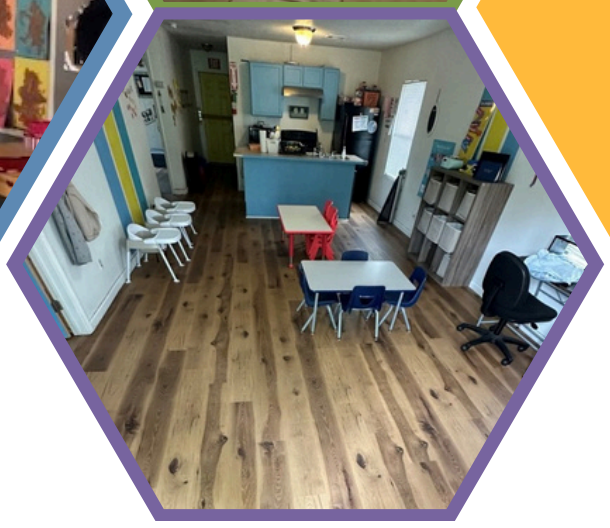
Beyond our schools, Tulsa Educare extends its impact through a variety of community programs that reach adults who care for young children who do not attend our schools. These initiatives provide learning opportunities and support across Tulsa for child care providers, parents and caregivers, and professionals with non-profit organizations.

Tulsa Educare's Early Learning Works helped improve health, safety, and learning environments at 44 licensed child care locations through a project called Elevating Futures. Upgrades included flooring, patios, windows, drainage, outdoor play equipment, children's furniture, and high-quality educational materials, helping providers create safer, more engaging spaces for children. The project was funded by a $708,000 grant to Tulsa Educare from the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness, using federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five funds.

> **The work has made a big difference for the future of my program.**
> **Owner, Family Child Care Home**







Tulsa Educare's Child Care Partnerships team works with 21 child care providers with whom we have formal agreements to strengthen teaching practices and children's school readiness. Through monthly data review meetings and two trainings focused on language development, we helped partners strengthen child assessments and use data to guide instruction. The percentage of children meeting widely held expectations in language, communication, and literacy increased from 77% in Spring 2025 to 92% in Spring 2026. These partnerships extend Tulsa Educare's impact to children and families beyond our own schools.



The team also supports partners in achieving national accreditation, a requirement for partnering with Tulsa Educare. Partners added in 2024–25 were already working toward accreditation when the state announced in February 2025 that national accreditation would be required to achieve 5-star status under Oklahoma's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), accelerating the timeline for completing the process. The team and our partners worked intensively to advance the accreditation process and meet this strengthened standard as quickly as possible.



Early Learning Works offered four cohorts of Don't Parent Alone during 2025–26, a five-week support group for new and expecting mothers. The groups provided a safe, supportive space for mothers to connect, share experiences, build relationships, and strengthen their sense of community as they navigate parenthood. The groups were offered in both English and Spanish.





Tulsa Educare will impact the early learning system through research, advocacy, shaping discussions, educating funders and leaders, and influencing public policies.

Tulsa Educare is committed to amplifying our impact beyond our community to strengthen the broader early learning system. Whether it's advocating with lawmakers, providing data, or sharing knowledge, we use our voice to advance policies that support children, families, and educators.

We were honored to welcome more than 300 early childhood professionals, partners, and funders to Tulsa for the Educare Network's Summit. As part of the convening, guests visited Tulsa Educare Celia Clinton and Early Learning Works exploring 25 learning spaces and engaging in small-group conversations with educators, leaders, partners, and a parent. The experience offered a close look inside Tulsa Educare's environment and approach to high-quality early learning and family engagement.

We helped Tulsa child care providers travel to Oklahoma City to make their voices heard at Child Care Action Day at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Providers began the day by participating in the Child Care Advisory Committee meeting, which advises the state on child care licensing standards and policies, before meeting directly with lawmakers to share their experiences and perspectives.







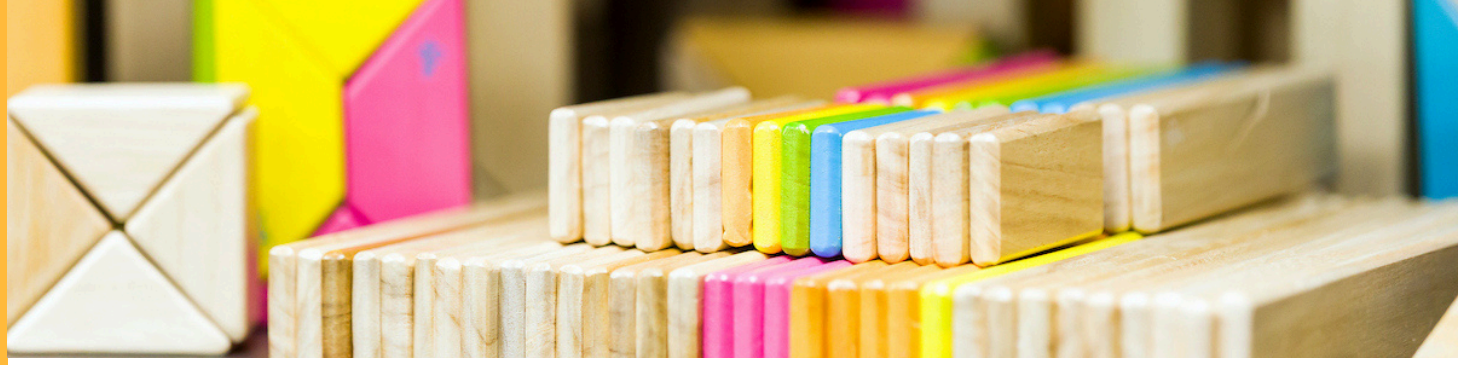
Since 2022, Tulsa Educare has partnered with family child care providers to advocate for a permitting process that protects children while reducing unnecessary barriers. This sustained effort helped advance HB 1847, eliminating the costly automatic sprinkler requirement while maintaining safety standards. Following the law's November 2025 implementation, the Tulsa City Council updated its fire code in January 2026, creating a clearer path to permits for approximately 200 family child care homes. We're especially proud to celebrate Jackie Evans of Aunt Jackie's Family Child Care Home, a Tulsa Educare Child Care Partner and the first partner to complete the permitting process, pass all inspections, and receive a Certificate of Occupancy from the City of Tulsa.

By using our voice and sharing knowledge, we aim to advance policies that uplift children, families, and educators across Oklahoma and the United States. This year, Tulsa Educare and George Kaiser Family Foundation welcomed a group of six Oklahoma State Legislators and eight members of Leadership Oklahoma Class 37 to learn more about early childhood education. We also met with representatives from several foundations to discuss how they can support high-quality early childhood education in their communities and hosted the State Chamber, Cherokee Nation representatives, and Dr. Raj Chetty, Professor of Public Economics at Harvard University, creating opportunities for meaningful conversations about high-quality early learning.





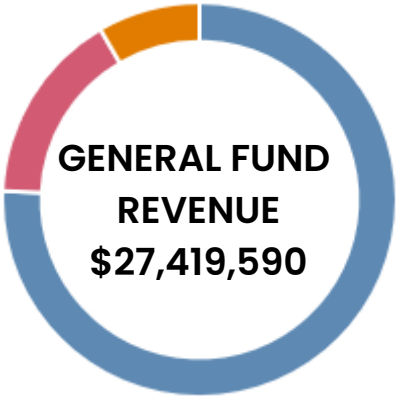




OUR BUDGET

Tulsa Educare's 2026-27 annual budget is just under $27.42 million.

75.7% funds our exemplary schools - $20.76 million
15.9% funds our amplified impact - $4.36 million
8.4% funds our indirect expenses - $2.3 million



Financial Audit

Tulsa Educare is committed to upholding the highest level of financial integrity and transparency. Our draft audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026 reported no deficiencies or findings in internal controls or grant compliance. It remains in draft form because the U.S. Office of Management and Budget has not yet issued the final 2026 Compliance Supplement for Single Audits. We expect the report to be finalized without changes once the supplement is issued.

In January 2026, Tulsa Educare was randomly selected to participate in the Head Start Improper Payment Study. After submitting all requested information, we were notified that the review was complete, and no further action was required.

Monitoring Results

Tulsa Educare is committed to meeting Head Start requirements and providing safe, high-quality early childhood care and learning. In its June 2022 Focus Area Two review, the Office of Head Start (OHS) found that Tulsa Educare met all applicable requirements. In 2025, following Tulsa Educare's self-report of a child safety incident, OHS conducted a Review of Assessment of Noncompliance (RAN) and issued a deficiency related to safety practices. We strengthened policies, staff training, and classroom monitoring and oversight. In July 2026, OHS confirmed that the deficiency had been corrected, reflecting our commitment to accountability, continuous improvement, and children's safety.

In addition to Head Start requirements, we follow standards set by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services' child care licensing, the Oklahoma Department of Education's Oklahoma Early Childhood Program (OECP), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Our practices also align with the nationally recognized standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

ACTUAL 2025-2026 VS. BUDGETED 2026-2027 REVENUE

		Actual 2025-2026		Budgeted 2026-2027	
		$	%	$	%
Federal	U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services-Early Head Start	11,160,216	39.5	11,195,122	40.8
Federal	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture-Child and Adult Care Food Program	851,384	3.0	875,000	3.2
Fed-State	Dept. of Health and Human Services-Child Care Subsidy	2,069,268	7.3	2,224,937	8.1
State-Local	Oklahoma Department of Education-Oklahoma Early Childhood Program	3,164,773	11.2	3,306,057	12.1
State-Local	Oklahoma Department of Education-Four Year-Old Program	282,664	1.0	212,000	0.8
Private	George Kaiser Family Foundation-Oklahoma Early Childhood Program	5,045,110	17.8	5,045,110	18.4
Private	George Kaiser Family Foundation-Birth Through Eight Strategy for Tulsa	1,368,054	4.8	1,524,276	5.6
Private	Tulsa Early Childhood Stimulus	2,509,960	8.9	965,523	3.5
	Other Donations, Investments, & Income	1,827,526	6.5	2,071,565	7.6
	Total Revenue	28,278,955	100.0	27,419,590	100.0

ACTUAL 2025-2026 VS. BUDGETED 2026-2027 EXPENSES

	Actual 2025-2026		Budgeted 2026-2027	
	$	%	$	%
Program Salaries and Benefits	18,529,425	65.9	18,730,567	68.3
Indirect Expenses	2,333,897	8.3	2,301,785	8.4
Child Care Partners	1,655,745	5.9	1,653,012	6.0
Repairs and Maintenance	1,882,912	6.7	1,116,402	4.1
Supplies and Equipment	1,257,594	4.5	927,017	3.4
Food	752,014	2.7	733,600	2.7
Utilities	357,221	1.3	352,346	1.3
Program Evaluation	374,464	1.3	300,000	1.1
Staff Development and Travel	338,202	1.2	375,491	1.4
Parent Meetings and Assistance	136,358	0.5	102,158	0.4
Other	300,207	1.1	624,447	2.3
Consulting and Contract Services	196,844	0.7	202,765	0.7
Total Expenses	28,114,883	100.0	27,419,590	100.0

Additional Data

Tulsa Educare values the power of data to guide our work. By monitoring our progress, we gain a clear understanding of how we are doing—celebrating successes while also diving into areas for growth. This commitment to gather annual metrics ensures that we are always striving for continuous improvement. Here are a few of the Core Measures we use to assess and strengthen our impact.

EXEMPLARY SCHOOLS

All children's learning and development are assessed in the fall and spring using norm-referenced child assessments. The results for our Tulsa Educare schools from Spring 2026 showed steady growth in most of the early learning domains.

Norm-Referenced Child Assessments: Average Standard Scores	Spring 2024	Spring 2025	Spring 2026
Social Emotional: DECA Total Protective Factor	100.0	103.3	102.9
Language Infant Toddler: ITLA	90.5	91.4	91.9
Language Preschool: PLS-5 Auditory	90.1	91.1	91.7

AMPLIFIED IMPACT

Since launching our community outreach center in 2020, Early Learning Works and Partnership Programs have steadily expanded their support, now regularly serving 45% of family child care homes in Tulsa County. As shown in the table below, we offer a variety of programs and resources for parents, caregivers, and non-profit organizations—all designed to strengthen early learning experiences and positively impact children beyond our school walls.

Programs for Parents and Community Organizations	2025-26 Events	Attendance (duplicated)
Talking is Teaching (in-person)	274	4,724
Early Learning Workshops and Lunch & Learns	33	323
Active Parenting and Parent Support Groups	48	319
Family, Friends, and Neighbors	16	176

Monthly Enrollment

Our average Early Head Start monthly enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year was 99.3% with a low of 97.2% in September 2025 and a high of 100% in January, April, and July 2026.



Medical and Dental Care

Access to professional, age-appropriate health care is a significant aspect of children's comprehensive well-being. We work with parents to ensure they understand the importance of establishing ongoing relationships with primary medical and oral health care professionals and accessing routine medical and dental preventative care, exams, and treatment for their children. The numbers in the table reflect data for children enrolled in our four schools and fifteen Early Head Start Child Care Partner programs in the 2025-2026 program year.

2025-2026	EARLY HEAD START	NON-EARLY HEAD START
MEDICAL % with exams	96%	98%
DENTAL % with exams	96%	71%



Kendall-Whittier



Hawthorne



MacArthur









Celia Clinton



Early Learning Works



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