

# Annual Report 2020-2021



**First Start  
Partnerships**  
*for Children & Families*

Growing **Hearts**  
&  
**Minds**



# A Message from the President & CEO

---



Annette Searfoss Ph.D.  
President & CEO

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families, like many other organizations in our county, state, nation and world, was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic again this year. Nelson Mandela reminds us that, *"After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come."* This Annual Report allows us to pause and reflect on what we collectively learned during our fiscal year, from August 2020 - July 2021.

What we learned most is that First Start is a special place - for our First Start Family (our staff members) and the children, families and communities we serve. It serves so many needs for our children and families - yes, education, but so much more. We make sure that children are healthy. We keep children safe. We provide high quality child care so that families can work and go to school to increase the economic stability necessary to support their families.

Our staff members provide the highest quality early childhood programming in Franklin County. First Start is one of only three Keystone STARS Four early childhood programs in Franklin County. Our teachers have college degrees and credentials, participate in on-going professional development, and educate families as well as children. They love what they do, and it shows.

COVID-19 put a spotlight on the critical role early childhood programs play in school readiness, family supports, and family economic stability. Early childhood educators in child care earn very low wages, and often have no health or other benefits, because child care businesses can only afford to charge what parents can afford to pay. This results in extremely high turn-over in our field, even before early childhood educators were putting themselves at risk of contracting COVID-19 by caring for our youngest children, who are unable to maintain social distances and take care of their own physical, social and emotional needs.

At First Start, we are fortunate that we can offer slightly higher salaries due to federal, state and local funding. We were able to maintain all salaries throughout the year, and we provide medical, mental health, dental, vision, life and short term disability insurances. We offer a 401K program, and recently increased our Paid Time Off for sick, personal and vacation times to care for ourselves and our own families.

We have maintained 90% + staff retention rate throughout the pandemic. The compensation and benefits help our staff care for their own families. But that's not what makes First Start such a special place. It's the Core Values our staff members articulated this year, and the mission that drives us all.

Thank you to our First Start Family, the families that trust us with their children, and the board members and community organizations that support our mission every day. I hope you will enjoy reading the highlights contained in this Annual Report.

In gratitude,  
Annette



# Our Core Values



## We value **family**

as children depend on family for love, safety, health and learning. We nurture a family-friendly workplace so our staff can be there for their families too.



## We value **compassion**

dedicated to love, joy, empathy and hope necessary to support children, families and our selves to be come who we want to be.



## We value **excellence**

and the continuous process of setting goals, reviewing progress, and planning for improved outcomes for children, families, and our organization.



## We value **partnerships**

for the connections to others that allow us to serve our children, families, and communities better than we can serve them alone.



## We value **equity**

to ensure equal opportunities for children, families and staff members regardless of race, ethnicity, ability, religion, language, family income, family structure, geography, gender identity and sexual orientation.

## Our Mission:

We partner with families, schools, and communities to ensure that each child arrives ready for kindergarten

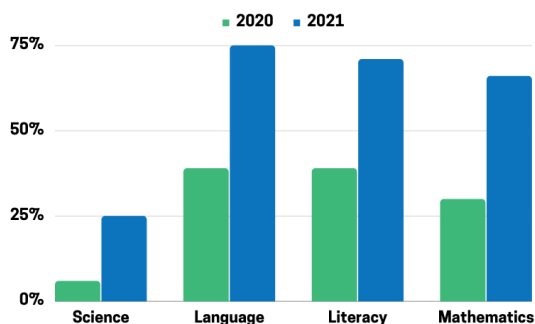
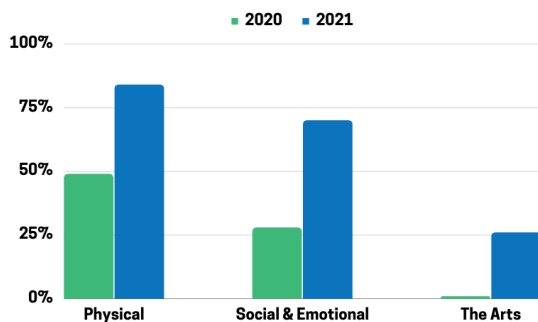
Growing **Hearts**  
&  
**Minds**



# Summer Learning Camp

Our children who were ready to enter kindergarten in the fall of 2021 received additional support by participating in our first summer learning camp! Ninety-one children attended from July 12 - August 6, 2021. This four-week camp operated four days a week for three hours a day in Waynesboro and Chambersburg. The focus areas were social-emotional development and language skills. Children who attended received a nursery rhyme learning kit and a backpack full of supplies to start their kindergarten adventure.

**HS/PREK Child Outcomes**  
**Child Assessment Percentage of Children**  
**at or Above Age Expectations**





# Each Child Ready

Our children are ready for school. They are ready to benefit from kindergarten experiences. Even with virtual instruction, and the disruptions of COVID-19, 93% of our children demonstrated the skills children need for kindergarten.

We know children are ready for school because we partner with Franklin County school districts, early intervention services, and families to plan our curricula, assessments, and transition to kindergarten. Teachers share each child's progress with kindergarten teachers to help children and families with that critical transition.

Our five public school systems partner with us to provide free, high-quality early childhood education for 712 children and their families. Since 2008, we have more than doubled the number of children served. State and federal funds are secured each year to continue and expand services, and there are many more children who would benefit from early childhood education. State funds include Head Start State Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) and Pre-K Counts. Head Start, a federally funded comprehensive program, has provided preschool for eligible families since 1965. Infants and toddler are the newest group to join our First Start family, serving families in both center-based and home-based services.



## HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START QUICK FACTS

### Head Start

- 316 Children and 261 Families were served in 2020-2021
- 82.7% Average monthly enrollment
- 34% of Franklin County's eligible children served
- 99% of children received medical exams and 64% dental exams

### Early Head Start

- 113 Children and 88 Families were served in 2020-2021
- 92% Average monthly enrollment
- 6% of Franklin County's eligible children served
- 69% of children received medical exams and 28% dental exams



STRONGER FAMILIES

# Families rely on First Start for preschool AND child care

*The COVID-19 Pandemic, and the lack of high quality child care options in Franklin County, made visible the important role we play in families' ability to work and attend school.*

All First Start classrooms operate at least five hours per day, Monday - Friday during the school year. Our Early Head Start classrooms in Waynesboro operate six hours per day, year round. These free programs help 712 families work, go to school, and take care of other responsibilities during those hours.

Some families, though, need more time to find, train, and maintain employment. We now offer **Preschool for Working Families** in select locations, open 7:00 am - 5:00 pm. We know this is just a start in meeting the needs of working families and the businesses that employ them. We plan to expand the hours of operation at other locations.

We are also supporting our Franklin County child care programs to increase their availability of accessible, affordable, quality early childhood services through **The Bloom Professional Development Center**, funded by the Professional Development Organization (PDO) @ PASSHE.

## PRE-K COUNTS QUICK FACTS

- 303 Children and 281 Families were served in 2020-2021
- 78% Average monthly enrollment
- 29% of eligible children served
- 12% children received Physical Exams and 10% children received Dental Exams





# The Family Center

*Our community made our vision a reality*

First Start Partnerships for Children and Families opened **The Family Center** at our newest facility, the Chambersburg **Early Learning Center** at 871 Stanley Avenue. The Family Center is a gathering place for families with young children. The purpose of The Family Center is to strengthen family protective factors that contribute to children's readiness for kindergarten.

The Family Center connects Franklin County families with each other and services available in Franklin County. The Family Center is open to all Franklin County families with children ages prenatal to eight. Services are free and there are no income guidelines.



thefamilycenter



In 2021 connections were primarily virtual due to the pandemic. Those connections included a monthly e-newsletter, The Family Center Connections, Facebook Live events, and social media posts and discussions.

Peace in the Park events brought together children and families at four Franklin County parks during the summer months. Children and families learned mindfulness techniques to manage stress, anger, and other strong emotions.





## VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

# Together, we can do anything

## Our Staff Members, Families and Community Partners Make First Start

The Family Center was the dream of our community's early childhood collaboration, Hope from the Start, which began in 2018. Hope from the Start is a partnership between First Start Partnerships, Franklin County government, schools, health care providers, the United Way, libraries, businesses, early intervention and all other interested community agencies and individuals. Wellspan Health's Healthy Franklin County provides backbone administrative support.

The purpose of Hope from the Start is to enable and empower families to foster growth in themselves and their children emotionally, socially, physically and academically through building hope and resiliency with trusting community support.

Our community really supported us this year, with funding from private donations, Franklin County Government, United Way, and Summit Endowment, to make The Family Center a reality. We, and the families we serve, thank you!



The Family Center is located at our **Chambersburg Early Learning Center (ELC)** at 871 Stanley Avenue. In addition to The Family Center, the ELC houses seven preschool classrooms, four infant and toddler classrooms, an Arts-Integrated Preschool classroom (in partnership with Cumberland Valley School of Music), and a commercial kitchen. Partnerships were key to developing this neighborhood center.



# A Message from the Board President

---



Gladys H. Leon  
Board President,  
First Start  
Partnerships

Another year of serving young children and their families has come and is moving along swiftly. We have so many achievements especially as we continue to work in pandemic mode. We have been blessed with the ability to reach and exceed so many of our planned goals, which all support the growth of the young children in Franklin County. We have managed to retain our outstanding staff while expanding roles to provide additional staff support and outlets for personal care and development. Our parents and staff worked through virtual as well as in-person instruction while continuing to focus on student growth and preparation to arrive at school ready for kindergarten.

As a Board, we are so proud of these achievements and the fact that our staff when challenged with our changing times, not only met but provided outstanding support for our students. We have come a long way in our journey and continue to move forward with our eyes never leaving the prize of accreditation with the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

As an active participant in the process toward accreditation from NAEYC, I have experienced firsthand our classroom environments as well as instruction and the small amount of fine-tuning that is needed to meet the NAEYC standards. We have a lot to be proud of and a reason to celebrate our journey as we go from Good to Great. Our past Board President would pose the question at our monthly meetings, "How do we compare to other Pre-school and Head-start Programs in our state?" We would discuss the various aspects of data that were available to compare programs but never quite found the needed proof. However, when we achieve NAEYC accreditation, which we will, we will have the much-needed proof of our status compared to other programs in the state.

Greatness is not achieved by individuals, it requires teamwork. And we have outstanding teams, our students and their parents, our teachers and the support staff, our coaches and mentors, our leadership team, our director, and our board all supporting each other and our mission.

We also have community partners supporting our students and programs such as Cumberland Valley School of Music, United Way of Franklin County, Keystone Health, Well Span Health and the Waynesboro School District, the Greencastle School District, and the Chambersburg Area School District.

Our journey to excellence is like a road in the country, there was never a road there but when many people walk on that path all headed in the same direction aiming for the same destination the road comes into existence. I am thankful we started on this path for our young children and we will not stop until we have a road paved for all children in Franklin County to arrive at the schoolhouse door ready for success and a bright future.

Thankful to you all,

Gladys Leon

# Funding and Expenditures

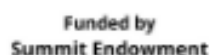
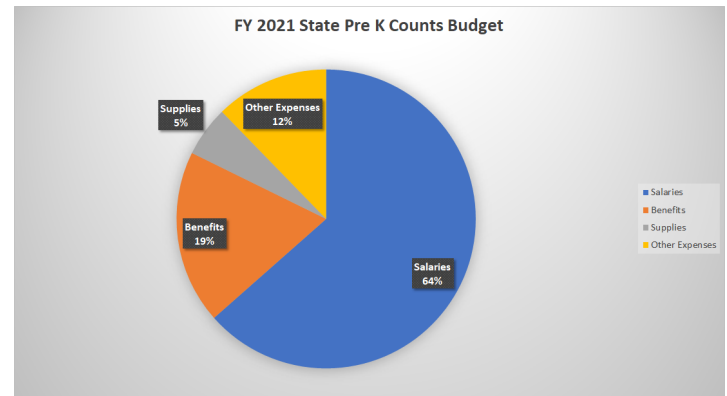
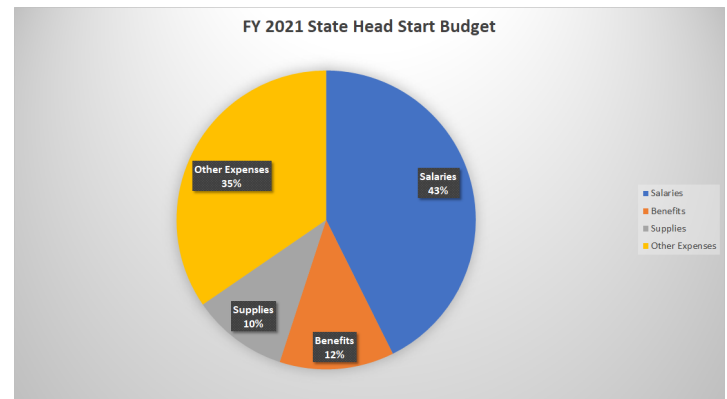
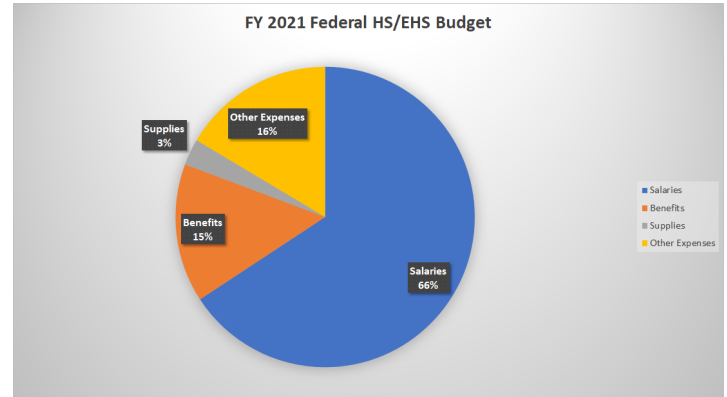
At the close of the 2020-2021 program year, First Start Partnerships for Children & Families (FSP), the grantee for the Head Start program in Franklin County, was funded to serve a total of 712 children with federal and state funds.

Combined, the organization received \$7,863,784 to operate the Head Start, Early Head Start & PreK Counts programs. In both the Federal and State budgets, personnel wages and benefits assume the majority of expenses.

In FY2021 FSP received \$3,596,923 in federal funding from the Administration for Children & Families to serve 351 children. FSP received \$816,000 in Pennsylvania State Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP) funds to serve 60 children.

Partnerships with five Franklin County school districts resulted in \$2,629,250 in Pennsylvania PreK Counts (PKC) funds to serve 301 children. Additional revenue from partnerships, grants, and other revenue streams contributed an additional \$821,611.

The most recent audit for the period August 1, 2020 - July 31, 2021 was performed by SEK CPA's and Advisors. In the independent auditor's report, the auditors expressed a "clean opinion" showing conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.







# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## **BOARD CHAIR**

Gladys Leon

## **VICE BOARD CHAIR**

Jennifer Hawbecker

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

Casey Bogner

Carolyn Clouser

Dr. Joanne Cochran

Tabitha Curtis

Ryan Fritz

Eric Holtzman

Dr. Tod F. Kline

Dr. Paul Sick

Ann Spottswood

Dr. Linda Thomas-Worthy

Alice Elia

Robert Thomas

## Administration

### **Dr. Annette Searfoss**

President & CEO

### **Jessica Kreigline**

Finance Director

### **Kim Holtry**

Human Resource Director

### **Melisa Ostrowski**

Communications Director

### **Shannon Rudy**

Quality Assurance Director

## Program Leadership

### **Jessica Hatch**

Pre-K Counts Director

### **Diane Hummel**

Head Start/ Early Head Start Director

### **Nicole Nicholson**

The Family Center Director



717.263.8019



[www.firststartpartnerships.org](http://www.firststartpartnerships.org)



[Facebook.com/FirstStartPartnerships](https://Facebook.com/FirstStartPartnerships)



[instagram.com/firststartpartnerships](https://instagram.com/firststartpartnerships)