

2020-2021 Annual Report

USD 489 Early Childhood Connections



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THE CONNECTIONS MISSION

Empowering families to live the possibilities by nurturing children, family and community connections.

CONNECTIONS GOALS

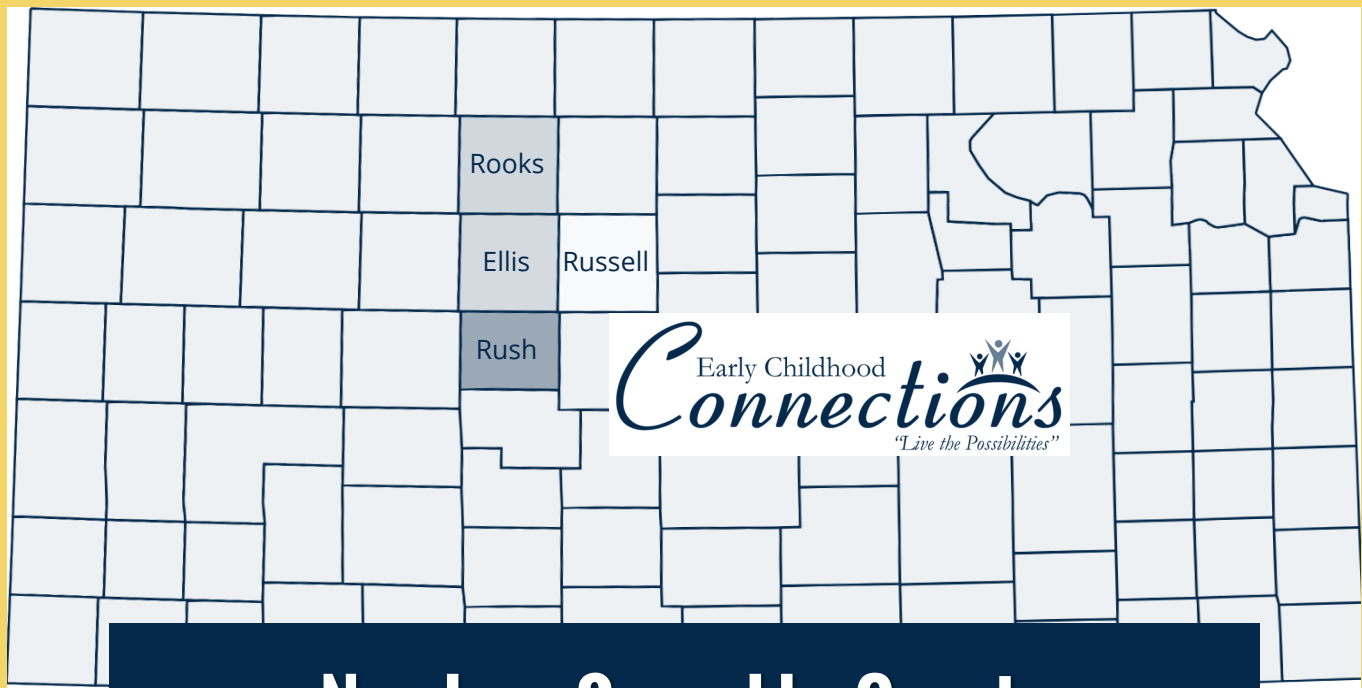
- ♦ Children are ready for school and sustained development and learning.
- ♦ Families are engaged in their child's education and with their own personal growth and development.
- ♦ Management systems promote school readiness and sustained development and learning.
- ♦ Community partnerships are developed and strengthened to meet the needs of children and families.



SERVICE AREA

The USD 489 Early Childhood Connections program provides center and home-based services. The USD 489 Early Childhood Complex is located at 2501 13th Street in Hays, KS and houses seven full-day preschool classrooms, three full-day EHS childcare classrooms, program staff and the USD 489 preschool classroom. A full day classroom is located at Simpson Elementary in Russell, Kansas. A classroom at Washington Elementary in Ellis, Kansas provides a morning and afternoon session of preschool.

Home based preschool, Early Head Start Home Visitation and Community Child Care services are provided in Ellis, Rush, Rooks and Russell Counties. Parents as Teachers services are provided in the Hays (USD 489) and Russell (USD 407) school district.



Numbers Served by County

Rooks County:

Early Head Start: 5
Head Start: 1

Ellis County:

Early Head Start: 105
Parents as Teachers: 59
3 to 5 Preschool: 108

Russell County:

Early Head Start: 4
Parents as Teachers (USD 407): 3
3 to 5 Preschool: 22

Rush County:

Early Head Start: 2
Head Start: 1

0 to 3 PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Parents as Teachers

Description: Parents as Teachers is a parent and child development program that serves families throughout pregnancy until your child enters Kindergarten. Parent Educators provide monthly personal home visits and regular screenings to make sure your child is healthy, safe and developing on track.

Eligibility: Open to all pregnant women and families with children birth to Kindergarten living in the service area.

Service Area: Serving families in the Hays (USD 489) and Russell (USD 407) school district.

Staff: PAT has two full-time Parent Educators and one 1 Coordinator.

Funding: Kansas State Department of Education + local match from USD 489 (Hays) and USD 407 (Russell)

Early Head Start

Description: EHS serves pregnant mothers as well as children through age three. Parents have the option of center-based, family childcare or home-based services. Parent Educators provide weekly personal home visits and regular screenings to make sure your child is healthy, safe and developing on track. Center-based and family childcare providers offer full day services. A Family Support Worker provides monthly visits to support family goals. The primary focus of the program is child development, parenting to strengthen the family and self-sufficiency.

Eligibility: Open to pregnant women and families with children birth to 3 with income eligibility.

Service Area: Serving home-based families in Rooks, Ellis, Russell and Rush Counties. Center-Based childcare is available in Hays. Family childcare options exist in Hays, Ellis, Russell and Gorham.

Staff: EHS has 6 Parent Educators, 3 EHS Lead Teachers, 10 Teacher Assistants, 1 Family Support Worker and 2 Coordinators.

Funding: Federal Early Head Start, Kansas Early Head Start Home Visitation and Kansas Early Head Start Childcare



Early Childhood
Connections
"Live the Possibilities"

3 to 5 PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Connections 3 to 5 Preschool

Description: Connections 3 to 5 Preschool is a comprehensive, child development program concerned with the health, education and welfare of its participants. Services are provided in the areas of: education, special education, nutrition, medical, dental and mental health and social services. Center-based preschool classrooms are available in Hays, Ellis and Russell. The program provides 8 full day classrooms (7.5 hours of class time) and 2 half day sessions (3.5 hours of class time), four days a week. Home-based preschool services are also available.

Eligibility: Families are eligible through Head Start criteria and Preschool-aged at-risk criteria which include: single parent family, teen parents, no parental high school diploma or GED, limited English proficiency, developmental delays, or eligibility for free lunch.

Service Area: Families living in Ellis, Rooks, Rush and Russell Counties.

Staff: The Preschool program has 11 Teachers, 18 Teacher Assistants, 4 Family Advocates, 1 Bilingual Assistant and 2 Coordinators.

Funding: Federal Head Start, Preschool-Aged At-Risk, Kansas 4 Year Old At-Risk and Early Childhood Block Grant

Program wide, Connections has 1 Director, 1 nurse, 3 administrative staff and 2 coordinators.



Early Childhood
Connections
"Live the Possibilities"

PROGRAM INFO DATA

The Federal Office of Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) provides comprehensive data on the services, staff, children and families served by Head Start and Early Head Start programs nationwide.

3 to 5 Preschool PIR Data

65%

Head Start children are up-to-date on a schedule of prevention & primary health care.

86%

Head Start children have up-to-date, or all possible immunizations.

31%

Head Start students have an IEP.

61%

Head Start children have complete dental exams.

91%

Head Start children have a dental home.

100%

Head Start have a ECE or related degree.

96%

Head Start children have health insurance.

95%

Head Start children have a medical home.

0 to 3 EHS PIR Data

42%

EHS children are up-to-date on a schedule of prevention & primary health care.

98%

EHS children have a medical home

99%

EHS children have health insurance.

22%

EHS children have an IFSP

77%

EHS Center-Based Teachers have a CDA.

94%

EHS children have up-to-date, or all possible immunizations.

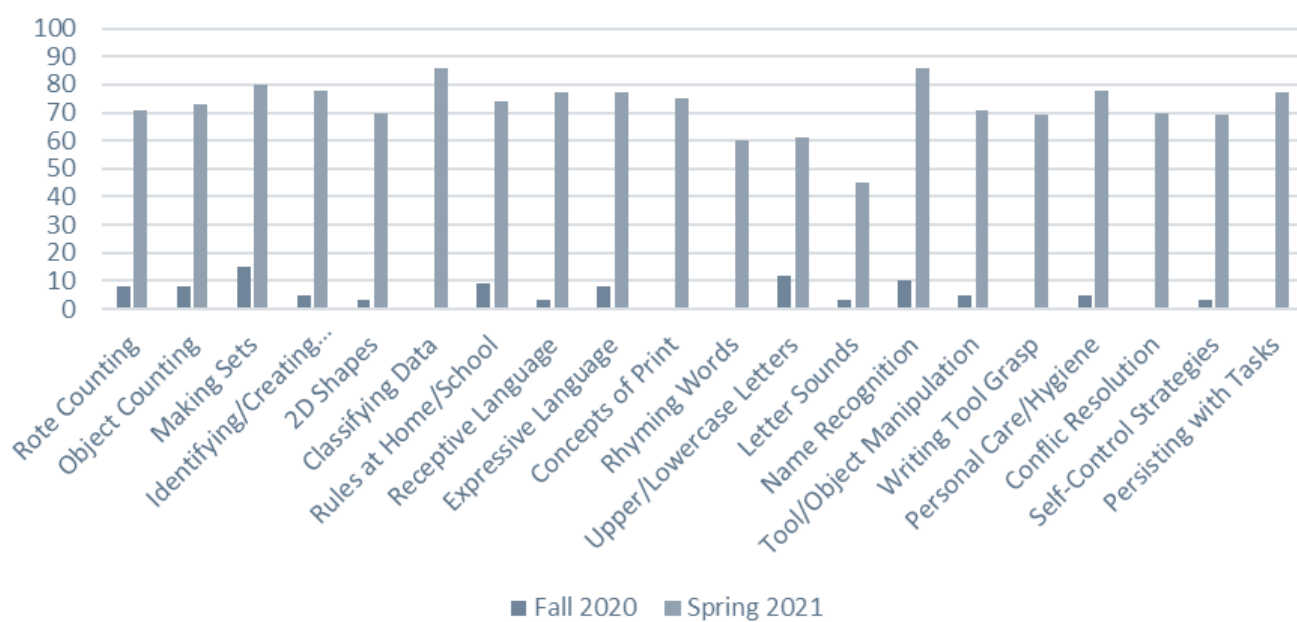


SCHOOL READINESS

The Connections program focuses on comprehensive services to prepare children to be ready to learn when they walk in Kindergarten. The program utilizes the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework as the foundation for their school readiness plan. The Head Start approach means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning and schools are ready for children.

The chart below compares results of the Fall 2021 and Spring 2021 school readiness goals.

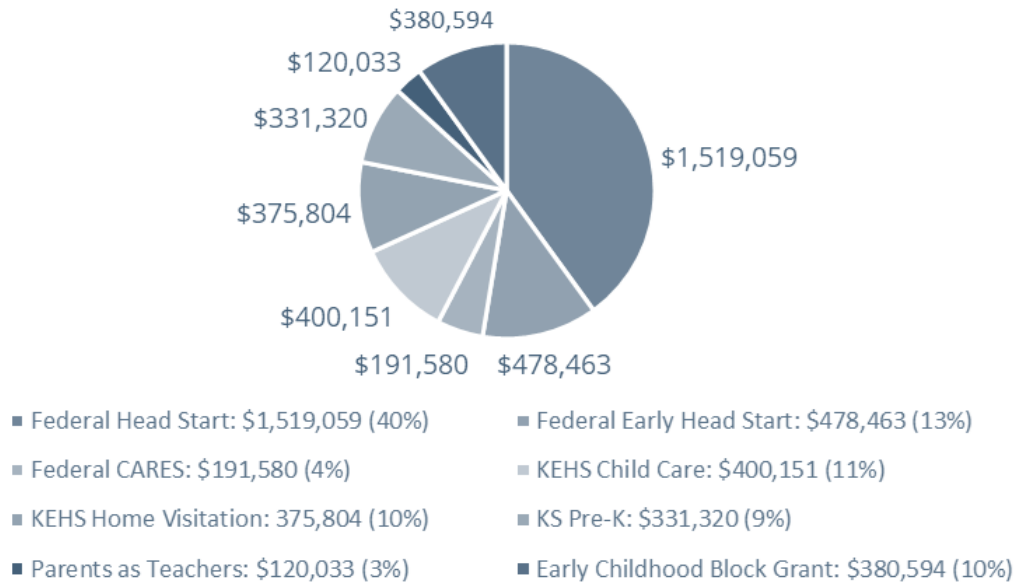
Fall vs. Spring School Readiness Goals



2020-2021 FINANCIAL INFORMATION

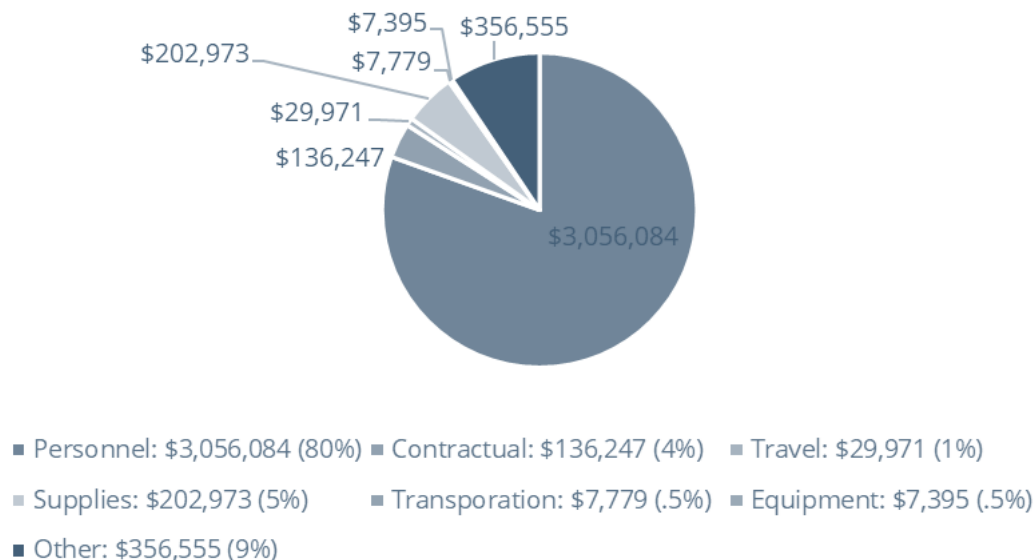
Early Childhood Connections secures funding for its programs through a variety of state and federal grants as shown below.

Early Childhood Connections Revenue



The largest expenditure in the Early Childhood Connections budget, is by far personnel expenses which includes salary and fringe for staff. Expenses by category are shown below.

Early Childhood Connections Expenses

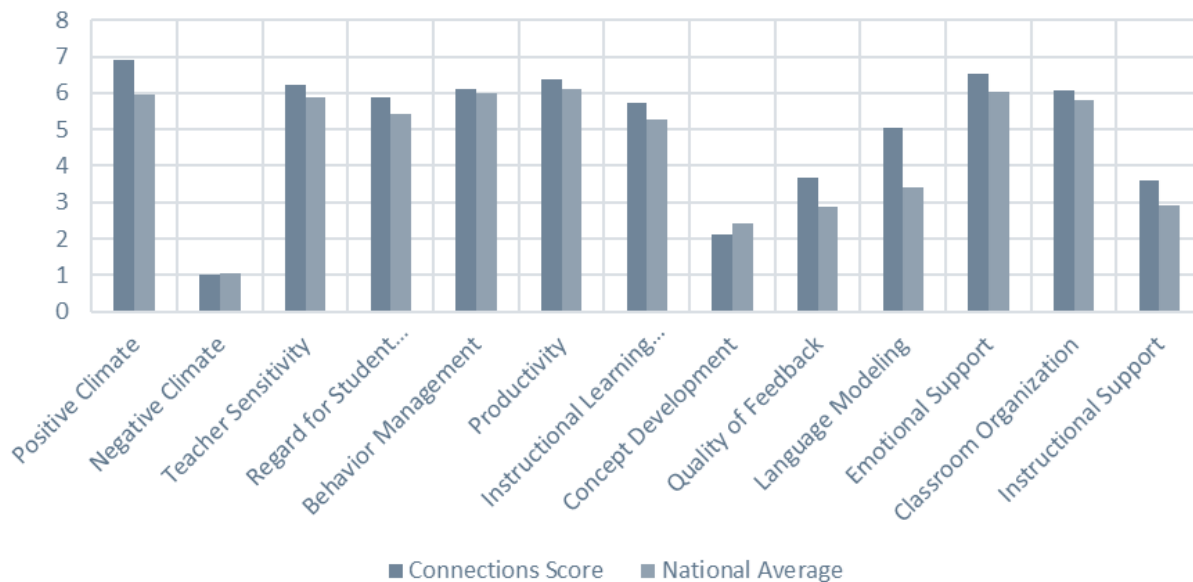


TEACHER CHILD INTERACTIONS

The CLASS tool measures the quality of teacher-child interactions. The CLASS examines social-emotional and instructional interactions that contribute to a student's social competence and academic achievement.

The chart below illustrates how Connections teaching staff compare to the national average.

Connections CLASS Scores vs. National Average



PARENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Policy Council

USD 489 Hays serves as the Head Start grantee. The USD 489 Board of Education is the governing body for the Connections program. USD 489 Board Members are publicly elected positions. The USD 489 Board of Education receives input from the Connections Policy Council. The Policy Council is comprised of parent and community representatives and work together to make programmatic decisions and meet the needs of the Head Start parents and community.

A big THANK YOU to our 2020-2021 Connections Policy Council Representatives, which include: Heather Schumacher, Kelli Wagner, Hailey Stipe, Kenzie Henman, Cathleen Kroeger, Skye Gallagher, Michelle Gallagher, John Hubschman, Dongni Shen, Abigail Buchholz, Kurston Gumm, Jennifer Berchard, Komoss Creamer, Kylie Hutchison, Rebecca Long, Aye Myint, Lindsey Engling, Jessica Romero, Kathy Desaire, Davis Qi, Courtney Clayton, Megan Schoendaler, Tereya McConnell, Elisa Chavez, Jennifer Oborny, Lori Hertel, Rachel Gardner, Shanna Dinkel and Donna Hudson-Hamilton.

Community Support

The Connections program enjoys the support from many individuals and organizations in the community. Individuals, like our Foster Grandparents, volunteer daily in our classrooms. Community neighbors, like CrossPoint Church, allow our program to utilize their building for staff, student and family events. Local businesses deliver treats and host staff appreciation events for staff. Area funders, like the Heartland and Midwest Energy Foundations, provide grant funding for special projects and equipment. The Dane G. Hansen Foundation sponsors the Dolly Parton Imagination Library for all children, birth to five, in Northwest Kansas.



COVID restrictions couldn't keep Foster Grandparent volunteer Kris Bollig (pictured left) down! She teamed with Connections staff to make a video of her reading her favorite book. Connections students in the classroom enjoyed hearing her fun rendition of, "Groovy Joe Ice Cream & Dinosaurs"!

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parents, as their child's most important advocate, are encouraged to be engaged in their child's education. A variety of opportunities are provided to encourage parent participation in the Connections program. Parent engagement activities are free to attend and include free childcare as well as a meal or snack.

Daddy and Me Day: This activity is designed to encourage fathers and male role models to be more involved with their child. Varied, structured activities are provided for adults to interact with their child and have fun together. Moms and females are welcome!

Family Activity Night: This event provides a free activity for parents and children to do together.

Playgroups: These events offer a time for parents of children ages 0 to 3 the opportunity for supervised, creative and social play.



The Connections PAT program hosted three free family-friendly movie's at the Dream Theater in Russell to increase parent engagement and raise awareness of PAT. Pictured above (at right) are Parent Educator's Dayna Schmidt and Pat Hammerschmidt getting ready to serve free popcorn!

AWARDS & HONORS

Each year the Kansas Head Start Association honors staff members, parents, community members and former Head Start alumni. In 2020-2021, Connections was recognized with three award winners.

Kansas Head Start Support Staff Member of the Year

Lizzette Alvarez, "Liz" is a Bilingual Teacher Assistant for the Connections program. She provides translation services for all the 3 to 5 classrooms as well as family services.

Teacher Jean Hertel says of Alvarez, "More important than simple translation services, is her innate gift with children that puts them at ease and makes them feel safe. Students who come to my classroom not speaking English are typically overwhelmed and scared. I believe it is due to her intervention that students pick up English so quickly."



Kansas Head Start Excellence in Community Service

The **CrossPoint Hays Church** (CrossPoint) is a valuable support to Connections family. Their contributions include: frequent use of their facility for staff meetings and program events, sprucing up our outdoor campus, support of Connections families with Christmas gifts and support of staff member morale through delivery of snacks and other morale boosters such as free gift certificates to local eating establishments.

Connections Director, Donna Hudson-Hamilton says of CrossPoint, "I can't say enough about how welcoming and neighborly they have been towards the program staff and children. Their actions are genuinely from a servant's heart."



Kansas Head Start Alumni Scholarship

Hays High Senior, Brent Rohr was a former Connections student in the Head Start pre-school classroom. He is active giving back to the community through his church and school.

Brent is using the scholarship to continue his education with the two-year Automotive Technology program at NCK Technical College in Hays. Brent's future goals are to open his own auto mechanic business.



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Feedback from parents is important. Parent feedback is collected to understand parent opinions, perspectives, attitudes and perceptions toward the program. Feedback is used to adapt and adjust to family needs. Parents have the opportunity to provide feedback each year they are in the program as well as when they exit. The chart below shows the results of the Parent Exit Survey.

2020-2021 Parent Exit Survey Results



PARENT FEEDBACK

Feedback from parents is important. Data and results of satisfaction surveys are important, but they sometimes miss the real results of a program's success. We asked parents how participation in the Connections program has impacted their child and family. Their comments below, offer results beyond survey data.

"A structured classroom environment has helped my daughter prepare for Kindergarten." - Preschool parent

"We have had a great experience. We've all learned and grown as a family. It has been a great support system for us." - Preschool Parent

"Having a Parent Educator visit each week has helped me understand my child's needs and development." - Early Head Start Parent

"PAT helps us understand the growth and development of our child at different stages of her life, get prepared for changes, and cope with challenges" - Parents as Teachers Parent

"We were able to properly prepare for Kindergarten and fill more comfortable in the school setting." - Preschool Parent

"We have made and accomplished many goals that did not seem reachable in the past." - Early Head Start Parent

"They helped my daughter in every way possible. They helped her learn how to open up and talk about her emotions and helped her grow as a person." - Preschool Parent

"Connections has helped me understand my child and her needs better, and helped me make positive changes to my parenting style" - Early Head Start Parent

"It is such a comfort knowing my child is in a quality childcare environment while I am at work." - Early Head Start Childcare Parent