

2015-2016  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



**Early Childhood Connections 0 to 5**

305 Main Street  
Hays, KS 67601  
785-623-2430

Sponsoring Grantee: USD 489  
Executive Director: Shanna Dinkel  
Director: Donna Hudson-Hamilton

Early Childhood  
*Connections*  
"Live the Possibilities"

Early Childhood  
**Connections**

## OUR MISSION

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

## OUR 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.



**OUR MISSION**

## OUR LOCATIONS

The Early Childhood Connections 3 to 5 program has five classrooms (morning and afternoon sessions) in Hays and one in Russell. Home-based services are provided to families in Ellis, Rush, Russell and Rooks counties. A collaborative preschool is located in Washington Elementary in Ellis, KS. This preschool serves both Head Start eligible and children from the community.

The Early Childhood Connections 0 to 3 program has a center-based program located in Munjor School. Early Head Start home-based services are provided in Ellis, Rush, Russell and Rooks Counties.

### **Hays Classrooms:**

Washington Site

### **Russell Classroom:**

Simpson Elementary

### **Ellis Classroom:**

Washington Grade School

### **EHS Center-Based:**

Munjor School



OUR LOCATIONS

## PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Early Childhood Connections is a child development/parenting/family services program for pregnant women and families with a child between birth & age four. The program integrates Parents As Teachers (PAT) and Early Head Start (EHS). Staff recognize parents as the first and most important teacher of their child.

The PAT program assists parents prenatally through age three by providing up to date information and opportunities to share information and experiences with well trained Parent Educators. Parent Educators meet with parents once a month in their home. The primary focus is child development and parenting and is open to any family that lives in the Hays School District. PAT, in conjunction with EHS, offers playgroups and socialization opportunities.



**CONNECTIONS 0-3**

## EARLY HEAD START

The EHS program is a more concentrated version of PAT. EHS serves pregnant mothers as well as children through age three. Parents have the option of center-based or home-based services. Parent Educators meet with home-based parents weekly and center-based families monthly. Primary focus in the program is child development, parenting, goals to strengthen the family and self-sufficiency.

EHS is open to families that meets income-eligibility in Ellis, Rush, Russell and Rooks County. Services are provided primarily through a Home-Based model and include enhanced community childcare options through partnerships with Family Day Care Providers to support changing family needs. The center-based site is located in Munjor School outside of Hays. These options allow families to choose the services that best fit their philosophy of care and meets their personal schedule. Through ongoing professional development, mentoring and the infusion of quality funds, community child care has improved the quality of services not only for enrolled Early Head Start children but for other community children served at these sites.

Through funding from the State of Kansas EHS, and the Early Childhood Block Grant, the program is allowed to serve a portion of the children through age four. This allows eligible children to remain in services until they are able to enter Connections 3 to 5 Program or another preschool, enhancing continuity of services.



## PRESCHOOL

The Early Childhood Connections 3-5 program provides preschool children and their families a head start on educational opportunities that may not be afforded to them otherwise. It is a comprehensive, child development program concerned with the health, education and welfare of its participants.

Connections provides services in the areas of: education, special education, nutrition, medical, dental and mental health and social services. Family engagement is a key component in the program. Parents work to meet their own individual goals to move towards self-sufficiency.

The program provides 3.5 hours of class time, four days a week as well as a home-based option. Families are eligible through Head Start criteria or identification of risk factors which include: single parent family, teen parents, no parental high school diploma or GED, limited English proficiency, developmental delays, or eligibility for free lunch (State Pre-Kindergarten). The program is provided at no cost to families and provides 1/3 of a child's daily nutritional requirement.



*Head Start is made possible by a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services and by people like you!*



# CONNECTIONS 3-5

## FACTS & FIGURES

### Connections 0 to 3 Counties:

108 children in Ellis County  
2 children in Rush County  
11 children in Russell County

### Connections 0 to 3 Staff:

10 Parent Educators, 8.5 FTE  
3 Coordinators, 4 FTE  
1 Support Staff, 1 FTE  
2 EHS Lead Teachers, 2 FTE  
7 Teacher Assistants, 5 FTE  
1 Custodian, .5FTE

### Connections 3 to 5 Counties

201 children in Ellis County  
4 in Rooks County  
47 in Russell County  
1 in Rush County

### Connections 3 to 5 Staff

8 teachers, 8 FTE  
14 Teacher/Family Assistants, 14 FTE  
1 Support Staff, 1 FTE  
3 Coordinators, 3 FTE  
1 Floating Assistant  
1 Custodian, 1 FTE

### Early Childhood Staff

1 Director 1 Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant  
3, 0 to 5 Program Coordinators 1 Grant Coordinator

*Enrollment is based on prioritized need so number may fluctuate between counties.  
All staff receive comprehensive training to meet the needs identified by families.*



# FACTS & FIGURES

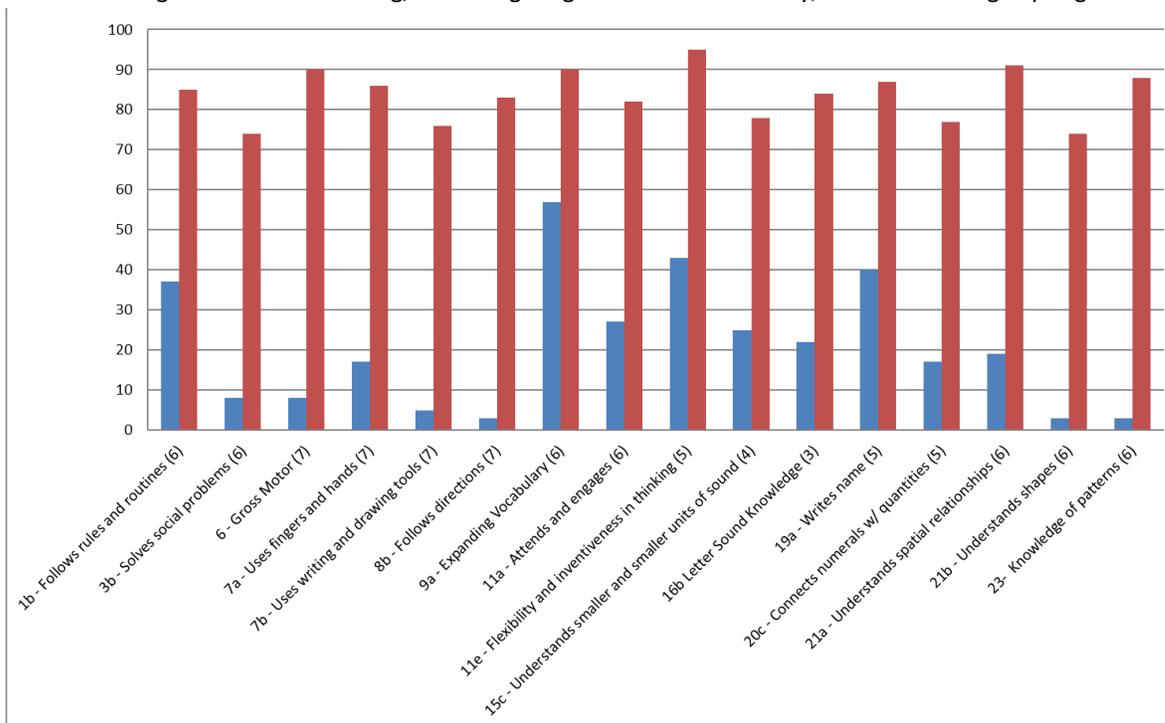
## SCHOOL READINESS

The Connections program focuses on comprehensive services to prepare children to be ready to learn when they walk into Kindergarten and for later life-long success. All children are continually monitored and assessed three times a year. Each of these assessments focuses on a number of objectives in the areas of literacy knowledge and skills; language development, approaches to learning; creative arts expression; social-emotional development; physical development and health; social studies knowledge and skills; science knowledge and skills; mathematics knowledge and skills’ and local reasoning.

Early Childhood Connections uses the Teaching GOLD assessment tool to assess all 3 to 5 children and to help teachers focus on all aspects of a child’s development ensuring that all children are making progress. The assessment is a strength-based approach and is based on observations taken within the context of classroom activities. The program collects data and analyzes children’s progress as part of program outcomes. Birth to three uses a locally designed assessment using indicators from Creative Curriculum and Foundational Curriculum. The 0 to 3 goals align with the 3 to 5 school readiness goals.

### Four Year Old School Readiness Goals

Percentage of Children Meeting/Exceeding Target Level of Proficiency, Fall 2015 through Spring 2016



## SCHOOL READINESS

The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework represents the foundation of the Head Start approach to school readiness. It aligns with and builds from the five essential domains of school readiness identified by the National Education Council's Panel and lays out areas of learning and development. Programs are expected to utilize the framework to align with state standards and local education agencies. A committee of Connections staff, Kindergarten teachers and other local early childhood educators met and outlined target school readiness goals.

The targeted goals are:

- Children will note and discriminate small and smaller units of sounds.
- Children will use letter-sound knowledge.
- Children will write their names.
- Children will demonstrate the ability to connect numerals with their quantities.
- Children will understand spatial relationships.
- Children will demonstrate understanding of shapes.
- Children will be able to demonstrate knowledge of patterns.
- Children will demonstrate use of fingers and hands.
- Children will demonstrate use of writing and drawing tools.
- Children will demonstrate appropriate gross motor skills.
- Children will attend and engage in group experiences.
- Children will show flexibility and inventiveness in thinking.
- Children will follow limits and expectations.
- Children will demonstrate the ability to solve social programs.
- Children will follow directions.
- Children will use an expanding expressive vocabulary.

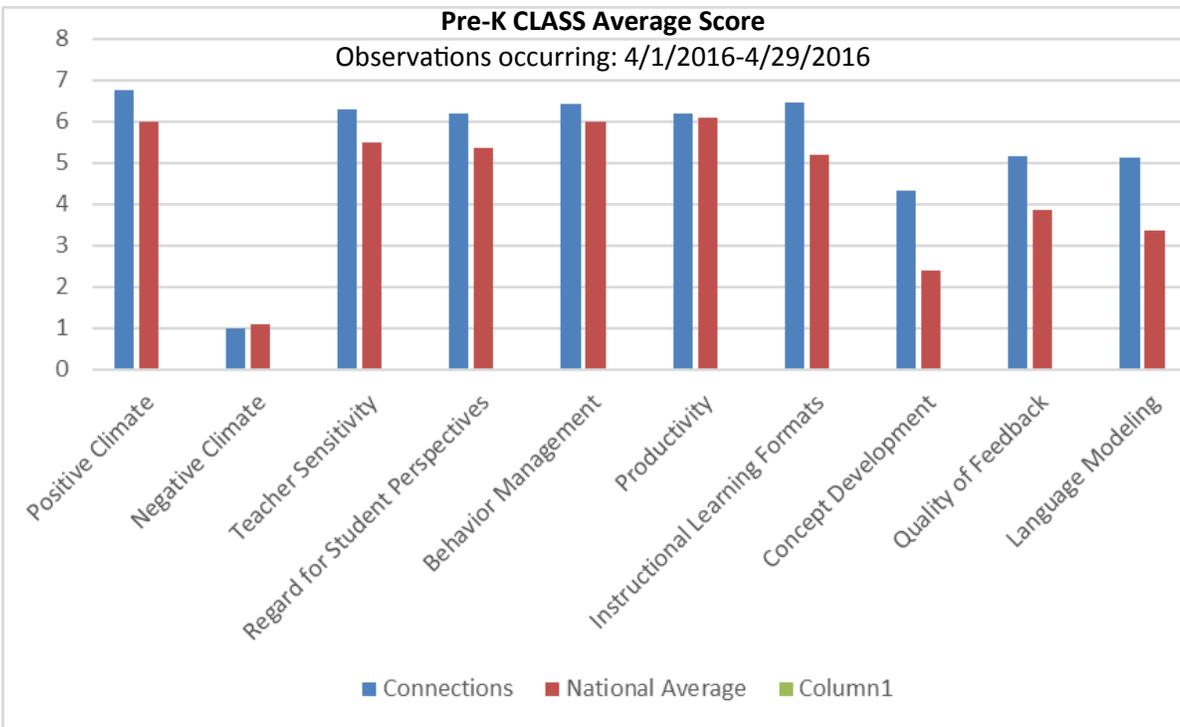


# SCHOOL READINESS

# TEACHER CHILD INTERACTIONS

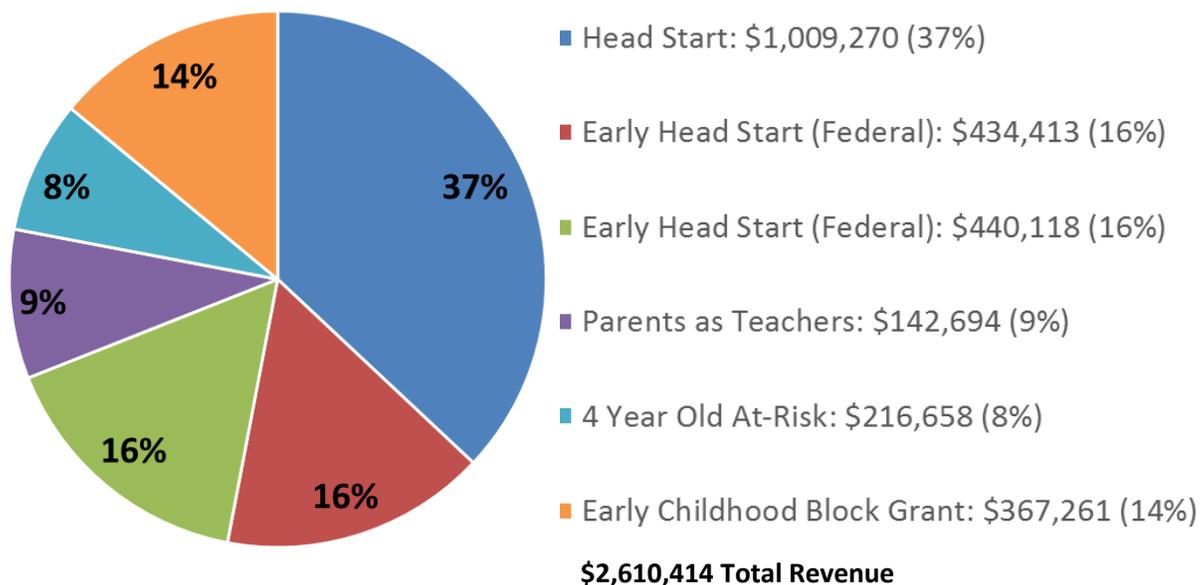
The CLASS tool measures the quality of teacher-child interactions. The CLASS examines social-emotional and instructional interactions that contribute to a student’s social competence and academic achievement. The CLASS has 10 subscales organized into three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support.

The graph below illustrates how the teaching staff in the Connections program compare to the national average.

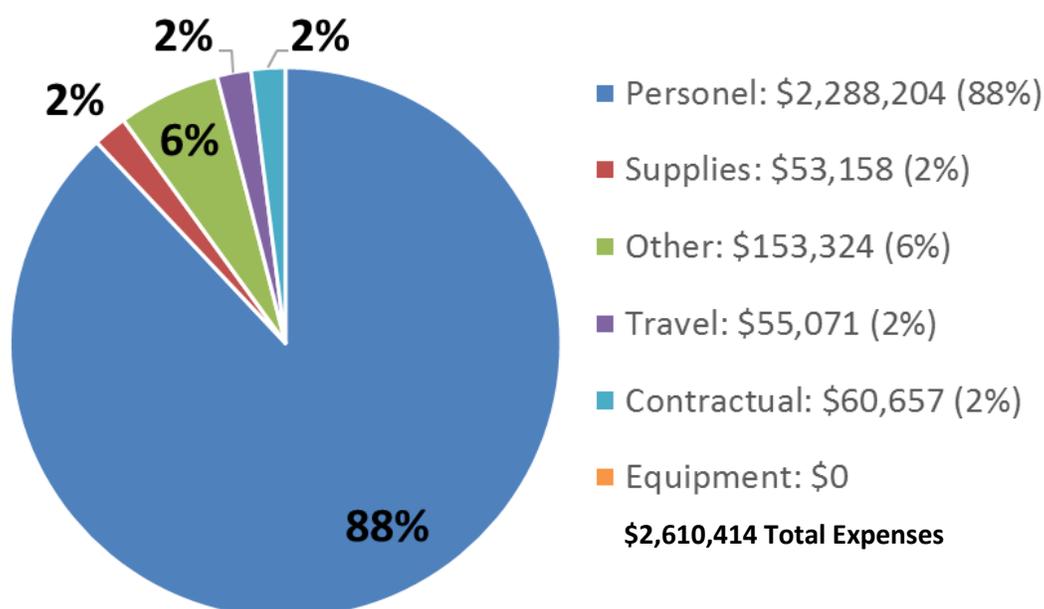


TEACHER CHILD INTERACTIONS

## 2015-2016 REVENUE



## 2015-2016 EXPENSES



## CONNECTIONS 3 TO 5 HEAD START PIR DATA

% of Head Start children up-to-date on a schedule of prevention and primary health care:	99%
% of Head Start children completing dental exams:	98%
% of Head Start children with up-to-date, or all possible immunizations:	100%
% of Head Start children needing medical treatment:	23%
% of Head Start children receiving medical treatment:	100%
% of Head Start classroom teachers with a ECE or related degree:	100%
% of Head Start children with health insurance:	89%



**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

## CONNECTIONS 0-3 EHS PIR DATA

% of EHS children up-to-date on a schedule of prevention & primary health care (PIR data):	91%
% of children with up-to-date, or all possible immunizations	96%
% of children needing medical treatment:	12%
% of children receiving medical treatment:	92%
% of Center-Based Teacher with a CDA:	57%
% of children with health insurance:	98%



**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parents, as their child's most important advocate, are encouraged to be engaged in their child's education. Recognizing that parent engagement is an ongoing process that varies from parent to parent, a variety of opportunities are provided to ensure parent participation. These opportunities include:

- Contributing to their child's individual goal development by the completion of a developmental checklist at the beginning of the year.
- Following through on home activities to help children meet individual goals.
- Providing ideas for implementation of curriculum goals.
- Contributing their child's work samples from home for inclusion in the child's portfolio
- Participation in curriculum goals through home activities.
- Participation in literacy activities.
- Volunteering in the classroom.
- Participating in home visits and parent/teacher conferences throughout the year.
- Ensuring their child attends class on a regular basis
- Communicating with classroom staff regarding home events that may affect the child's classroom performance
- Participating in Family Activity Nights and other parent activities
- Participating in parent and child activities in the classroom.



**PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT

**Empowering Parents!** The Connections program offers parent involvement/parent support activities. Free childcare is provided at all activities as well as a meal or snack.

The following activities are available to parents free of charge:

**TGI . . . Family Night Out** This monthly activity offers families in our community an evening that begins with a free meal, supervised planned activities for children while parents relax. Presentations from experienced professionals on a variety of topics to support families are provided.

**Daddy and Me Day** This monthly activity is designed to encourage fathers and male role models to be involved in the life of their child. Varied, structured activities are provided for the adults to interact with their children and have fun together. Moms and females are welcome as well.

**Eat Healthy-Be Active** The goal of this program is to help parents provide nutritious meals for their family. A facilitator from the Ellis County Extension office leads the group through a four week series.



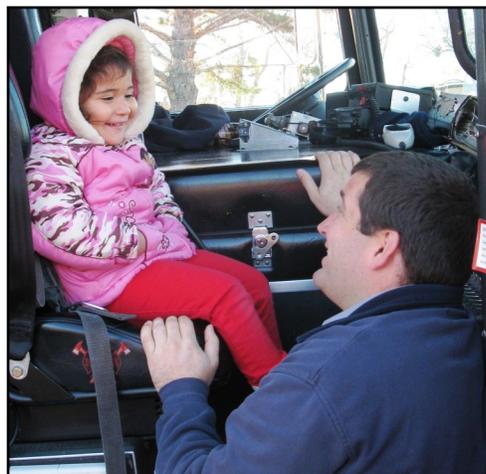
PARENT ENGAGEMENT

## PARENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Connections needs the support of each child's family and members of the community in order to operate each year. Federal grants only fund 80% of the Head Start program; the remaining 20% is obtained locally through "In-Kind." In-Kind is parent and community participation in the form of donated time, services, supplies or funding. Any person who volunteers on a regular basis, will be required to have a background screening and TB skin test.

Families and other community members have multiple opportunities to participate and contribute towards meeting our goal. They can:

- Work at home with their child on home activities provided by the center
- Attend parent meetings/serve as an officer
- Serve on Policy council
- Serve on the Health Advisory Committee
- Help with the program Self Assessment
- Serve as a bus monitor
- Be a field trip chaperone
- Answer phones or other office duties
- Help with parent information boards
- Classroom helper
- Other positions needed in the center
- Serve on school readiness committee
- Provide a training or share a skill with children or parents



*"Grandma" Jo Pfannenstiel volunteered as a Foster Grandparent in Connections Preschool classrooms for over 10 years. Grandma passed away this Fall and will be deeply missed by staff and students alike.*

**PARENT & COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

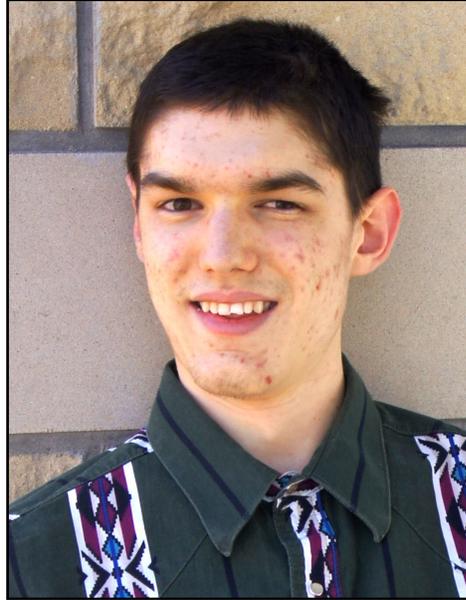
## Nikolas Wolf

Nikolas Wolfe received the KHSA Head Start High School Alumni Scholarship.

Nikolas is presently enrolled at Fort Hays State University, majoring in physics. He graduated high school with a 4.0 in his last year.

When Nikolas was enrolled in Head Start, he had just been recently diagnosed with ADHD and was learning to use his glasses, specifically bifocals. He credits Head Start with being able to give him more one-on-one help with reading, writing, grammar and spelling. He became more social and loved to play with the other preschoolers.

The program wishes Nikolas well as he begins his post secondary education.



## Michelle Dannels

Michelle Dannels received the KHSA and Region VII Head Start Teacher of the Year Award.

Michelle has been instrumental in establishing a new Early Head Start center. It was through her hard work and dedication that the center went through licensing and reviews without any areas of concern. Not only does Michelle supervise staff, she also carries a case-load of families that she serves.

Michelle does all work with a smile on her face. She is a true asset to the Connections program and to the Head Start community.



**CONNECTIONS HONORS**

## 2015-2016 Policy Council Members

USD 489 Hays, Kansas serves as the Head Start grantee. The USD 489 Board of Education is the governing board for the Head Start program. USD 489 Board members are publicly elected positions. The USD 489 School Board receives input from the Connections Policy Council, comprised of parent and community representatives. They work together to make programmatic decisions and meet the needs of the Head Start parents and community. The following individuals give their time and talents to Policy Council:

Sarah Smith  
Jessica Honeyman  
Brenna Garcia  
Gina Bright  
Kurstan  
Angel Mellott  
Danielle Anderson  
Jerica Priest  
Cecley Stevens  
Dana Lecklider  
Emmy VanDerWege  
Shane Scranton  
Kayla Jones  
Janelle Williams  
Tosha Hays  
Stacy Nussbaum

Shannon Howell  
Ashley Luna  
Melissa Coca  
Juanita Sotres  
Sascha Seib  
Amanda North  
Shawna Lyon  
Tammy Lawson  
Marcy Beougher  
Joan Dunn  
Josh Waddell (Board of Education)  
Shanna Dinkel (Superintendent)  
Donna Hudson-Hamilton (Director)



**POLICY COUNCIL**

## Creating a Community

The hallways of the Early Childhood Connections building (formerly Washington Elementary) were given a make-over by students from the Fort Hays State University art program. The students worked during the summer to complete a mural on the walls of the historic school. The mural portrays different landscapes and coordinate with the doors, awnings and porchlights outside each classroom.

“Our goal was to create a community of learning,” said Connections Director, Donna Hudson-Hamilton. “Each individual classroom is a home for the students inside. Both staff and students love the end result.”



**SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

## Participant Feedback

We asked families, "What changes have you made in your family or personal life as a result of Early Childhood Connections?"

*"I know how to get help and deal with my child's emotions" - Bianca*

*"The program has helped my little family in big ways. When we started, my daughter and I had a strained relationship. We fought a lot and her speech was struggling and I was struggling to teach her correctly. With the help of her teachers and speech teachers, we now have an open communication line between us. I couldn't ask for more. Head Start has been the best decision I ever made for my little family." - Carrie*

*"I have overcome a lot of obstacles in my 5 years of being in the program. I am now able to support my family without assistance and have the confidence to parent the way my kids need.—Kayla*

*"I feel like we plan more learning time and complete our goals more often. The program has shown the importance of learning at home." - Bethany*

*"I am taking more time to read with my children. I am more patient with his progress and understanding of his abilities." - Sonia*

*"I learned positive discipline techniques and ways to help my child learn" - Jennifer*

*"I have learned to stay positive and patient with my child. I have learned to work as a team to help him grow and learn new things." - Katie*



**MAKING CONNECTIONS**