

2025

Education Department Annual Report - 2025

PREPARED BY:
RYAN J. CRAIN

HO-CHUNK NATION | W9814 Airport Rd



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Ho-Chunk Nation Education Department

SCR Division

Submitted by: Bethany Redbird, School Community Relations Director

School – Community Relations

Community Relations provides liaison and advocacy services, support to families, schools, and communities, as well as programming and funding opportunities. We also provide professional development opportunities to K-12 staff and administration. We administer two main student support programs, the Johnson O'Malley Grant and the PreK-12 Grant Program.

Pre K-12 Grant Program

Pre K-12 Grant Program is serviced by one Grant Specialist, Tracee Hall. In response to funding constraints, the PreK-12 Grant Program continued to allow each student a max funding amount of \$2000.00. However, all the previous grants available pre-pandemic were open again (with the exception computer purchases). We provided funding for over 750 Prek-12 grant requests. The number of students utilizing the grant decreased significantly after COVID pandemic; however, student numbers are slowly increasing each year. We continue to promote the program through social media outlets, email, phone calls, etc., but plan to do additional outreach. We are working with the Enrollment Division to send out information on the PreK-12 Grant Program to all 1397 Ho-Chunk enrolled students ages 3-18.

School Community Relations Specialists

School Community Relations Specialists are dedicated to outreach in the 11 JOM areas. In addition to assisting Johnson O'Malley parent IECs, SCR staff work with local school districts, parents, communities, and participate in building positive working partnerships between them all. John Dick, SCR Specialist worked with the Wisconsin Rapids and Nekoosa Area JOMs of throughout the 2024-25, Tom Redbird III, SCR Specialist, worked with Black River Falls, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Osseo-Fairchild, Stevens Point, Tomah, Wittenberg Area JOM IECs, and Bethany Redbird worked with the Baraboo and Dane County JOM IECs.

Johnson O'Malley

Johnson O'Malley IECs (Indian Education Committees) continued to meet according to their by-laws to assist students in each of their areas. All of the JOM IEC's have concentrated their funding on reimbursements detailed in each annual JOM Expenditure List, as well as provided cultural activities and reimbursement support for the students in each area. Some IECs continued to meet virtually, but the majority of the IECs went back to in-person meetings. Example of cultural activities provided by JOM IECs include : pow wows, beading, sewing and crafting events, cultural presentations within schools, culturally appropriate book purchases for school libraries and graduation recognition events.



The largest events held for all the 11 JOM areas were the Back-to-School Registration Events held in July 2024. We provided backpacks and all the necessary school supplies for ALL the students who registered for the JOM Program. This helps ease the burden on the parents to purchase students' school supplies. We provided supplies and backpacks to approximately 800 students. We hold the Back-to-School Bashes in seven JOM areas to provide parents/students opportunities to register for JOM and receive the backpacks and school supplies. We plan to host another Back to School Bash in 2025.

JOM IEC Events and Projects:

Baraboo: Reimbursement requests; graduating seniors' gifts, Halloween Cultural Event, End of the Year Cultural Event.

Black River Falls: November Flag Raising; monthly sewing/crafting nights at D1CC (all materials provided); mini pow wows at the BRF schools; graduation recognition event

Dane County: All City American Native/American Indian Graduation Event, Cultural Events, Holiday cultural event, reimbursement support.

WI Rapids: Working with Title VI; Cultural events, culturally appropriate book purchase for school libraries, student tours of the Ho-Chunk Nation

Outreach

Outreach by the SCR staff is ongoing. We have two SCR Specialists and the SCR Director assisting the 11 JOM areas we serve, as well as Ho-Chunk students and descendants around the US. We are consistently working with parents/guardians to strengthen IECs and community resources. At the request of parents, we have also made contact with school administrators in Black River Falls, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Madison, Nekoosa, Onalaska, Port Edwards, Tomah, Wausau, Wittenberg, Wisconsin Rapids, and Wisconsin Dells. At the request of parents/guardians, we have attended IEP meetings, disciplinary meetings for students, and have assisting advocating for our Native students within the schools. Opportunities to maximize resources multiply when the JOM and Title VI programs work together for student achievement. With the addition of the Tutor Services Division, SCR staff work closely and collaboratively with tutors and the Tutor Services Director to provide comprehensive services to our students. SCR specialists, as well as the Director, have been involved in on-going monthly equity meetings with the school districts of Nekoosa, Wisconsin Rapids and Wittenberg.

SCR provided presentations and tours of the Ho-Chunk Nation to over 400 fourth grade students from Wisconsin Rapids in April 2025 and to the Trempealeau Elementary students in May 2025. We have reached out to districts we have not met with in the past to provide an overview of our programs and services. We will continue to contact districts in which we have Ho-Chunk students to create connections and relationships going forward to best serve the needs of our students and families.

The SCR Director assists in facilitating Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) groups for Wood County, as well as a virtual SEED group (January – May 2025) commitment that assists educators, community members and HCN staff members on a journey of self-discovery and social justice. It



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addresses racism, white privilege, ableism, gender identity, and many other topics to help participants address their own bias and privilege, and to shift perspectives to provide equitable and inclusive teaching practices. We hosted a SEED Intensive Retreat at the Wisconsin Rapids Middle School in August 2024, and had 25 educators attend. This retreat provides the basics of SEED in a 3-Day timeframe, rather than the standard 9-month format.

Database

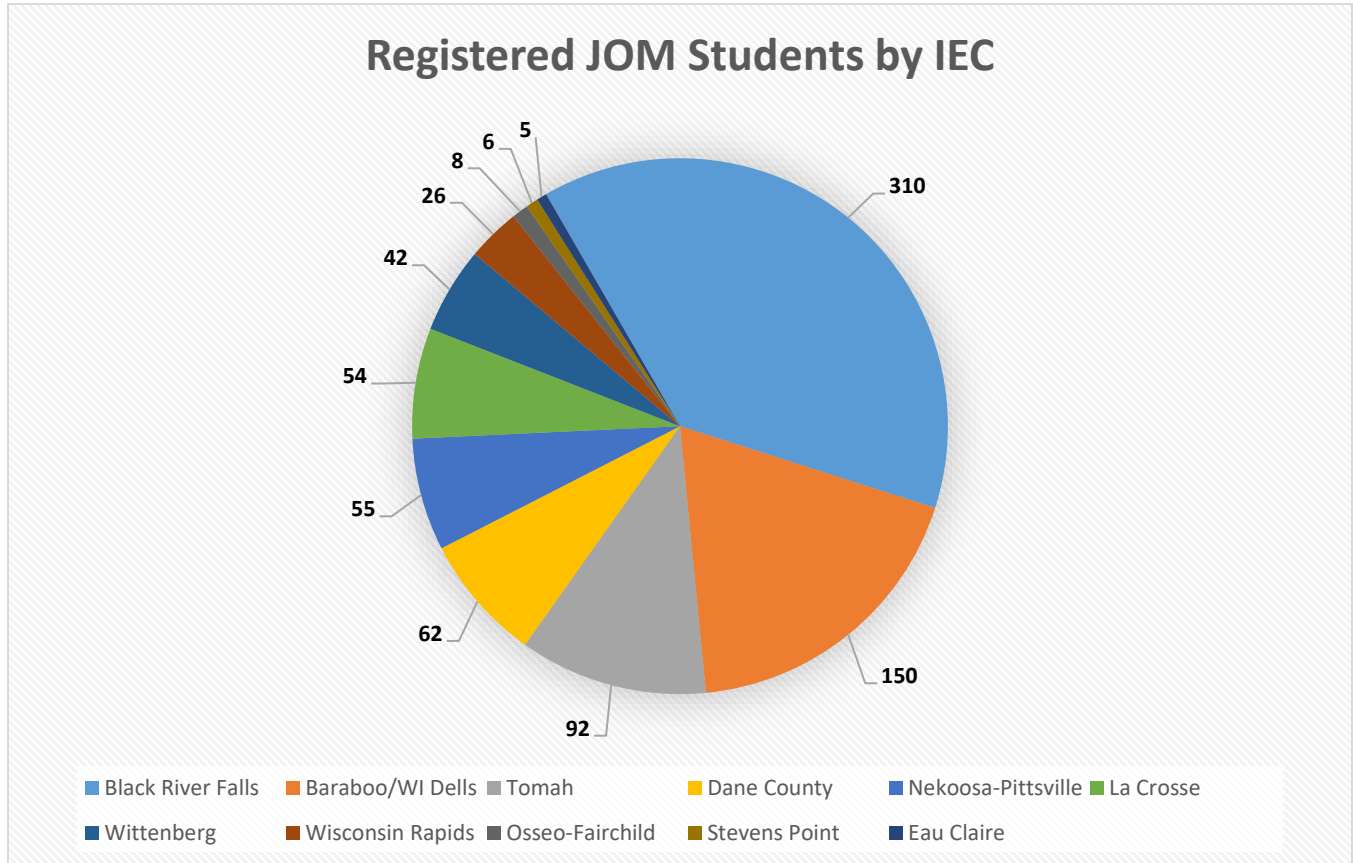
The SCR Division has been collaborating with the other Education Department Divisions and our Data Analyst to meet with multiple vendors and choose a Database vendor to meet our needs. Skyward was chosen, however, we have not been able to utilize Skyward services for a database, and continue to use the database created by the HCN IT Division in 2006. This database is outdated and incomplete, and we have difficulty keeping record of our students and their data for our Prek-12 Grant Program. We have no database to help keep record of our JOM student data at this time. We need a database to keep record of all our students, as data entry of our students takes up a tremendous amount of time. A database would eliminate this issue and assist in providing comprehensive data on the students we serve.

Challenges

We face numerous challenges in the SCR Division. We aim to provide comprehensive services to all Ho-Chunk enrolled students, as well as our JOM students, but small staff numbers, lack of funding and no database make this difficult. With federal JOM funding cuts affecting our JOM budget, limited NPD funding for the Prek-12 Grant Program and no database funding, we are unable to serve our current students as well as potential students who qualify for our assistance.



Johnson O'Malley Information



PreK-12 Top Grant Requests (2024 – 2025)

Grant Request Type	Amount of Requests
Internet Access Support Services	185
Extracurricular Activity Participation Fees	175
Extracurricular Activity Equipment/Supplies	85
School Meal Costs	60
Camp Fees	46
School Supplies (Grades 6-12)	50
School Supply Reimbursement (K-5)	30
Driver's Education Fees	25
Tuition Fees (Private/Parochial School)	23
High School Graduation Expenses	19



Higher Education

Submitted by: Diane Rave, Higher Education Division Manager

Introduction/Overview

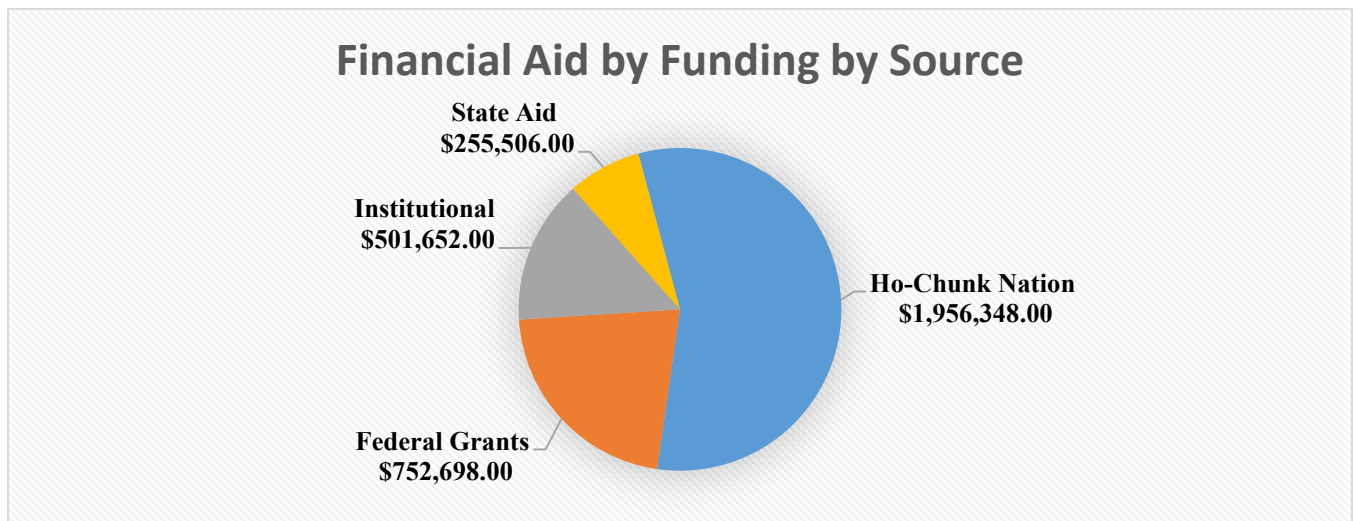
The Higher Education Division is pleased to present the accomplishments, challenges and future strategies based on the work completed in the 2024/25 fiscal year. This year was marked by continued interest from our Ho-Chunk members returning to college, an increased number of degree completions and successful navigation of financial and staffing challenges that impacted program delivery.

Accomplishments

During 2024/25 fiscal year the Higher Education Division awarded a total of **421 scholarships** to **218 enrolled Ho-Chunk members**, amounting to \$1,956,348.00 in financial support. The average disbursement for a Ho-Chunk Scholarship for an undergraduate was approximately \$4,225 and graduate degree recipient was approximately \$7,320. These awards provided support throughout the 9-month academic year, with approximately 40% of our students also attending summer term and receiving financial assistance.

A key requirement for all Higher Education students is to complete a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**. This application allows students the ability to be considered for federal, state and institutional financial aid at their respective schools. In coordination with the school's financial aid office, the Ho-Chunk scholarship funds are applied as part of the student's overall aid package after federal, state and institutional aid is awarded. This approach allows students to maximize all available financial resources.

For the 2024-25 academic year, the following aid was provided to our awarded Ho-Chunk scholarship applicants attending Title IV eligible, non-profit or public institutions:





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These additional sources of financial aid complement the Ho-Chunk Scholarship and support students' educational expenses, including tuition, required fees, books, housing/meals, transportation, and personal expenses.

In terms of academic achievement, a total of **34 undergraduate** students and **17 graduate** successfully completed their degrees during the 2024-25 academic year.

Accomplishments FY 2024/2025 goals and strategies

A key accomplishment during this fiscal year was successfully securing a **True Budget Increase**. This increase was essential in allowing the Division to continue providing scholarships throughout the spring and summer terms. Without the increase, scholarship funding would have been depleted by April 2025, affecting over 100 students during critical enrollment periods.

The Division initiated discussions with several internal departments to develop and internship program for 2025. The lack of allocated funding in this year's budget resulted in the postponement of this initiative.

Our Federal grant with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) allowed the Division to hire an additional College Advisor. One advising position is currently open and recruitment is underway. Additional efforts have begun to restore staffing levels to pre-pandemic levels in order to meet the increasing demands of student advising, application processing and academic student supportive services.

Problems encountered and corrective actions taken

Once of the most pressing challenges encountered during the fiscal year was the reduction of our initial budget request, which lead to the early depletion of our scholarship funds. Starting in July 2024, the Division identified the shortfall, we prepared justifications for an increase for additional funding. An increase was approved by Legislature in November 2024, although the new line items did not become available until January 2025. During this waiting period, the Division discontinued support programs to our students for support programs that included application and testing fee reimbursements, tutoring services, licensure, study abroad and professional development opportunities. Staff had minimum participation in recruiting events during the waiting period for the True Budget Increase consideration.

Staffing challenges also significantly affected our services. Many students returning to higher education after prolonged breaks require specialized support. These students faced a variety of challenges, including navigating academic transitions, financial instability, limited access to technology, and difficulties with online learning platforms. The limited number of trained staff made it difficult to provide adequate and timely advising and financial assistance to all students.

Additionally, major changes in Federal Student Aid process occurred in the 2024-25 academic year, one of the most significant changes to the federal application was the decrease in how they calculated student and parent income, the change made a significant impact of overall financial aid eligibility for our students.



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Goals and strategies for the upcoming fiscal year (FY 2025/2026)

1. Secure another True Budget Increase that allows for necessary funding for the spring and summer terms and support services for our current post-secondary students.
2. Collaborate with other Ho-Chunk Nation program to generate interest in high demand fields that align with employment needs within the Nation.
3. Increase staffing capacity to improve academic advising, particularly for incoming freshman and at risk students. A goal is to engage freshmen through virtual meetings throughout the academic year, and work closely with our at-risk students.
4. Enhance student outreach efforts by offering application workshops, open house events, and increase access to scholarship opportunities for students completing applications early.
5. Develop and submit a formal proposal to implement a structured internship and Mentorship programs for our Ho-Chunk students.
6. Strengthen inter-agency partnerships with departments such as Labor, Personnel and Housing (HHCDA) Departments as it pertains to post-secondary students.

Alternative funding sources and partnerships utilized or explored during FY 2024/2025

The Division continues to work closely with Financial Aid Offices at post-secondary institutions to assist in maximizing their access to federal, state and institutional aid. Student are encouraged to apply early for financial aid as early as possible to qualify for limited state and campus-based aid.

To support this effort the Division has re-implemented a priority filing date for the Ho-Chunk Scholarship Application. For the 2025-26 academic year, the filing date was set for July 15, 2025.

The Division continues to emphasize early application submission to align with stat priority filing deadlines, many of which fall in January and February. This approach is intended to ensure that Ho-Chunk students receive the full benefit of available funding.

The Higher Education Division team remains committed to supporting the academic success of Ho-Chunk Nation members. Despite financial and staffing obstacles this year, our division has maintained critical services to our students and continues to find ways to meet the needs of our Ho-Chunk members. We look forward to promote our scholarship programs and strengthening partnerships that support student achievement.



Tutor Services Division

Submitted by: Arielle Hall, Tutor Services Division Manager

Accomplishments during the Fiscal Year

- 19 Tutors in 11 service areas
- 14 District Collaboration MOU's in place
- 327 Students 4K-Post Secondary School utilizing the services
- Positive collaboration with Ho-Chunk Youth Services, Good Life Grant, Language Division and Agriculture Departments
- All staff are First Aid & CPR Certified
- All staff are certified in Youth Mental Health Navigation
- All staff attended Circle of Security training
- All staff attended Autism Awareness Training

FY 2024-25 Goals and Strategies

Each month the program set a goal:

Month	Goal	Result
September	Clean up SOP for Division	Met goal and received approval from the Education Board of Directors in October.
October	Each area to meet 1,200 total minutes per week with students. Increase program total to 200 students. (We are currently at 166).	Most areas met this goal and increased our student numbers in the process. We also picked up Post-Secondary students.
November	Advertise our program at 2 events in your area.	Met goal. Staff attended Pow Wow's, Area Meetings, Head Start meetings, JOM/T6 meetings and local libraries. Staff offered Professional Development to districts they work with.



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December	We need a way to progress monitor subjects, attendance and participation.	Team created Excel sheets to track vital data. This will have to work until we can utilize the Skyward Database.
January	MOU's in all 12 areas we service.	Have not met this goal as of June 2025. Waiting on MMSD, MKE. We do however have 14 MOU's in the state, in schools where we support students and families.
February	Use data collected to begin summer programming. Collaborate with Youth Services & Ag/HHCDA programs.	Using the data tracker to make each areas enrichment activities align to needs has been very helpful in aligning programming with WI DPI Standards.
March	Update grades from second trimester. iReady data is now ready.	Using our self-made spread sheets grades are entered. We now have 2 data points for most students.
April	Summer program registration – 60% of our current student base will register for summer enrichment	Will not know if we met this goal until all programming has started (June 16 th).
May	Collaborate with Youth Services for end of year celebrations, summer programming and camps.	All areas are combining summer programming. All areas are working/planning Youth Leadership Camp in June, Family Healing Camp in August.
June	End of year data entered. Summer Enrichment begins.	



Problems encountered and corrective actions taken

1. Transportation. Staff are using personal vehicles to travel to districts/schools.
 - a. We were able to work with Fleet and Youth Services to reserve vehicles as needed.
 - b. We do not have this in place for all areas yet. Chicago and Minneapolis are still a problem.
2. Standard Operating Procedures were not clear to staff up my start in September.
 - a. We created a sub-committee and got to work. The new SOP's were presented at the October All Staff meeting.
 - b. Also worked on Policies & Procedures for the program.
3. Ongoing Funding.
 - a. The Tutor program was part of a grant. This grant was due to expire in November 2024. We were able to drag it out until March 2025, due to not using all line items.
 - b. A true increase was requested and granted in January 2025 to allow the staff to complete the 24-25 fiscal year.
4. Sustaining this program long term.
 - a. Met with Legislature multiple times (up to twice a month) in anticipation of Youth moving under Education and what the new budget would look like, including tutors.
 - b. Submitted several program budgets as requested by Legislature in February 2025.
 - c. Still no updates, unsure if we will have funding the 25-26 year.
5. School districts unaware of our services and culture relevant practices.
 - a. Provide Professional Development opportunities for staff at no cost.
 - b. Attend District Board Meetings throughout the state and provide information.
 - c. Host culturally relevant activities in schools and in collaboration with field trips.
 - d. Attend educational trainings to network with districts.
 - e. Attending IEP/504 meetings to assist parents, as requested. Collaboration with Dr. Funmaker to ensure legal terms for our students are being met. Advocate for student behaviors. (hair, cultural doings, clothing, etc)
6. Staff burn out
 - a. Our budget allowed for two All-Staff training events. We work really hard to make sure we have learning time and fun/team building activities at our trainings.
 - b. Making sure staff has time to recover after the end of quarters/trimesters.
 - c. As a Division Manager, I try to approve all PTO requests and advocate for self-care.

Goals and strategies for the upcoming fiscal year (FY 2025/2026)

1. Secure funding to include not only wages, but operating expenses as well.
 - a. Seek grant funding
 - b. Collaborate with districts that have a Title 6 program.
 - c. Collaborate with districts to allow staff to attend trainings and PD at no expense to our program.
 - d. Attend Ho-Chunk Area meetings to see what the community needs are.
2. Reliable database
 - a. We have purchased Skyward, however have not been able to use it.
3. Assign tutors to high-need areas.



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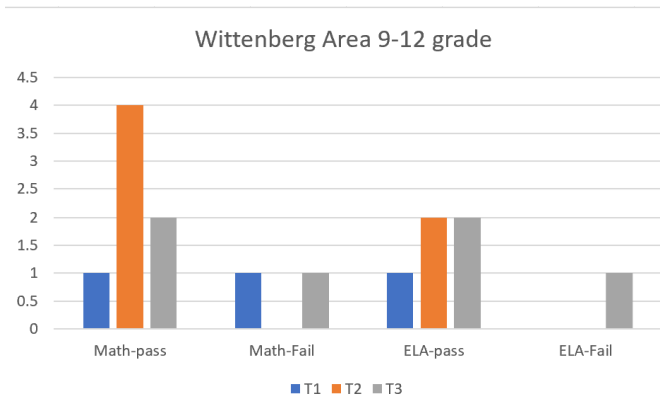
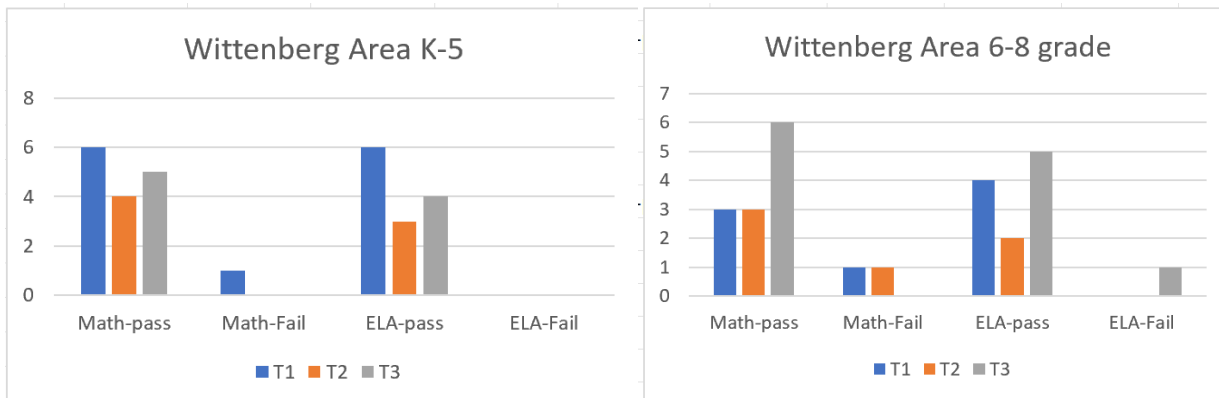
- a. Tomah needs more support
- b. BRF needs more support

Alternative funding sources and partnerships utilized or explored during FY 2024/2025

1. Title 6 programming to hire additional tutor in BRF.
2. Title 6 programming to purchase classroom supplies as needed and funding allows.
3. Partnership with Social Services programs for additional supplies
4. Partnership with Good Life Grant for additional supplies and talking circle collaboration.
5. Community support services unique to areas. (Book donations, CESA trainings, Florist donations for gardens).

Tutor Services Graphs

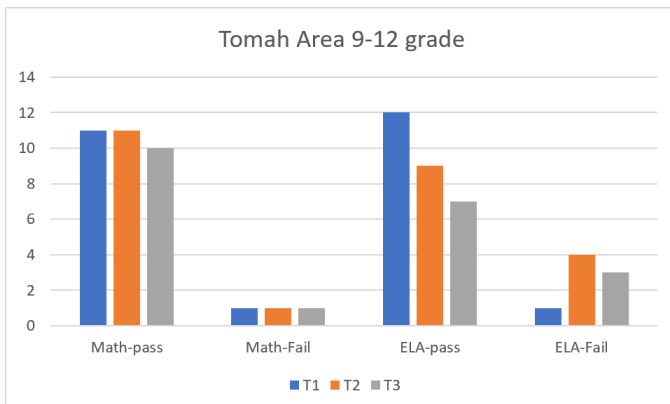
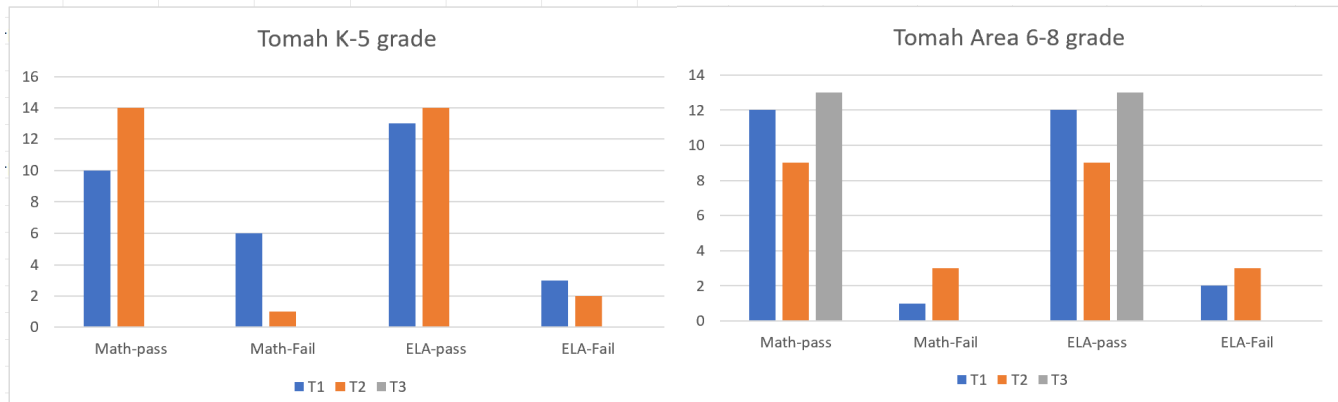
Wittenberg



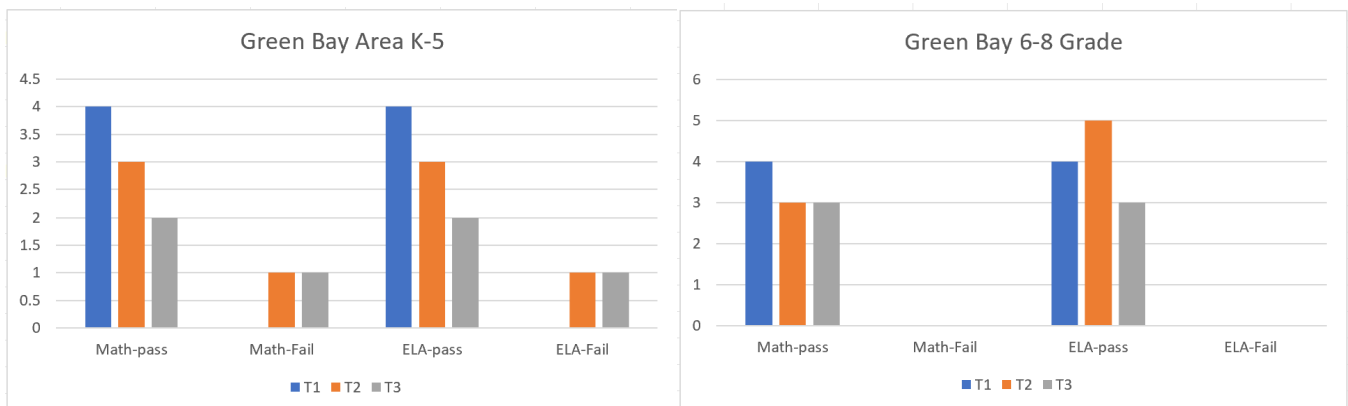


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Tomah



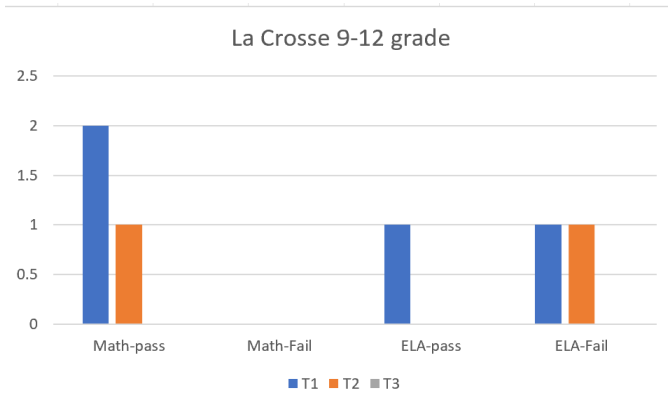
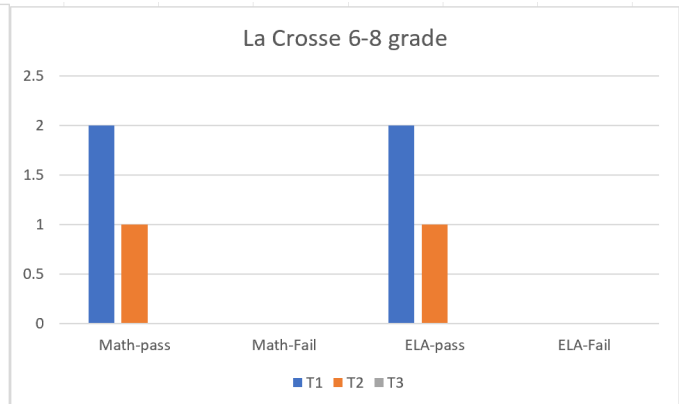
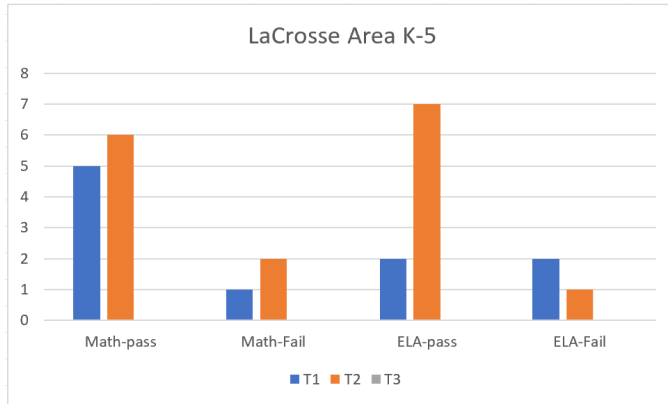
Green Bay



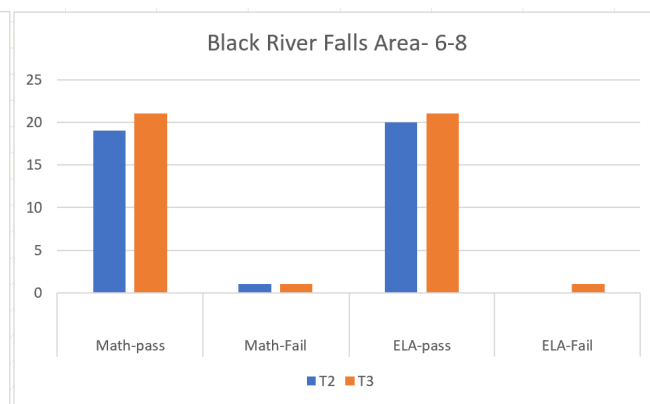
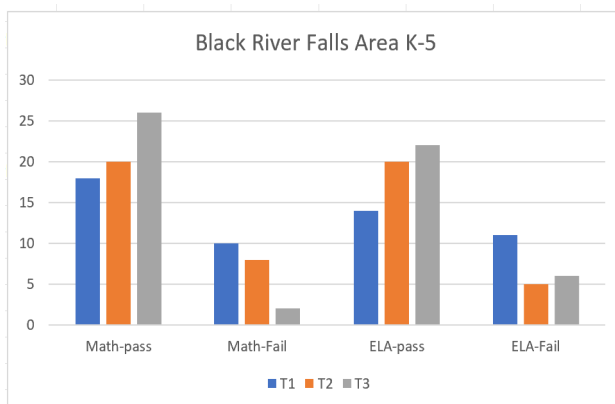


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La Crosse

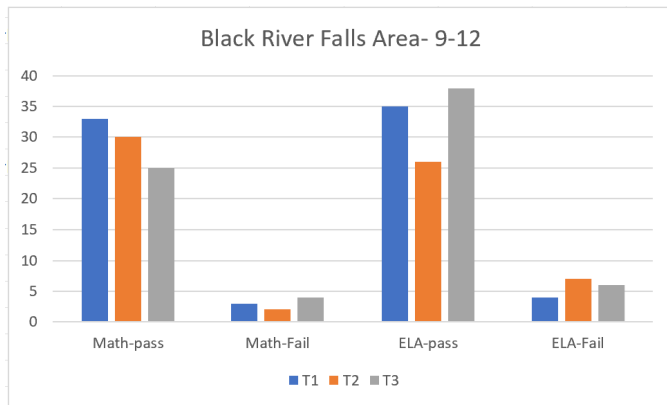


Black River Falls



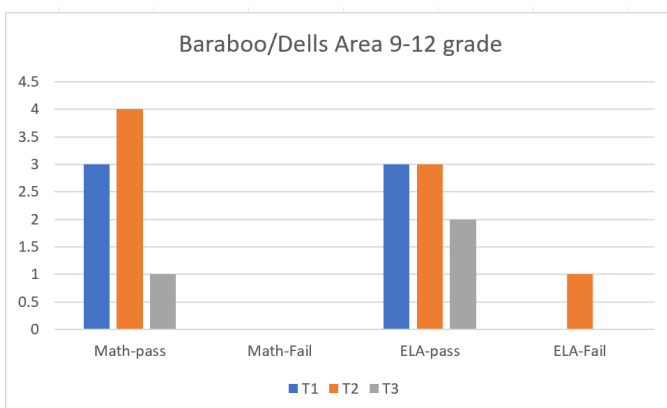
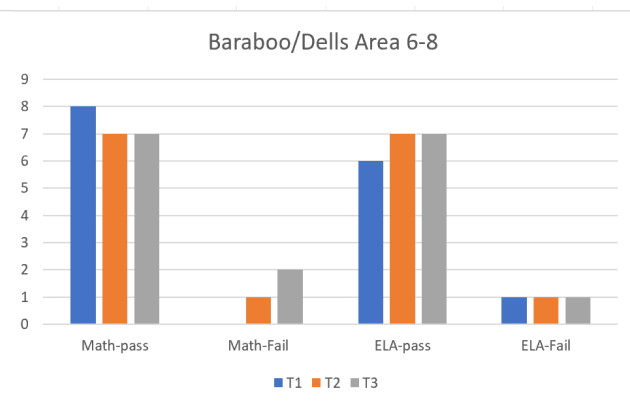
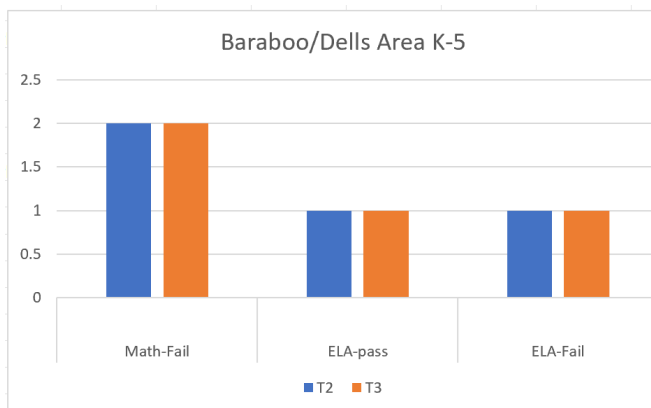


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BRF High School had 22 AP level courses passed.

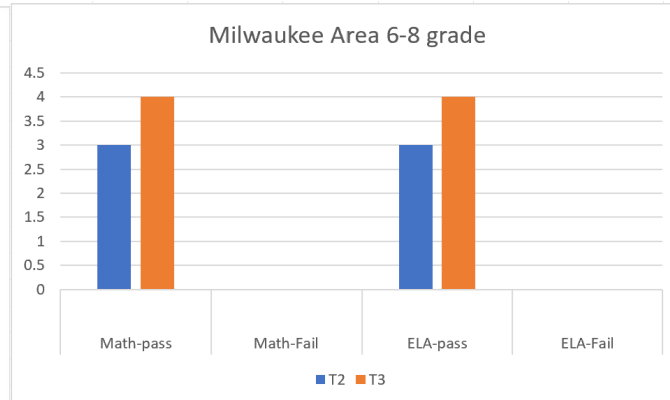
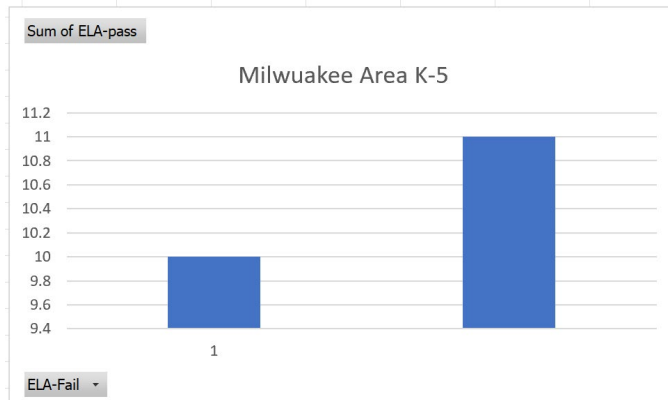
Baraboo/Dells



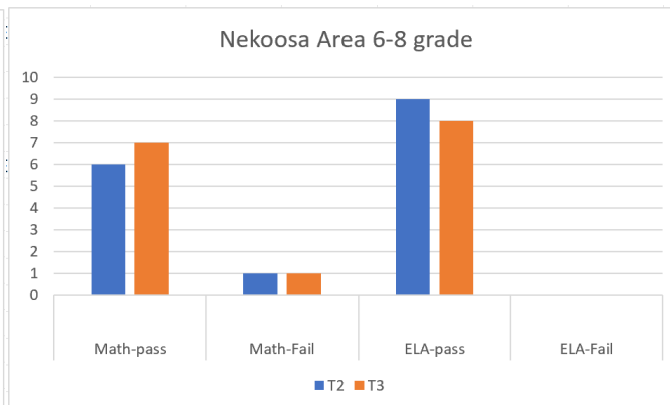
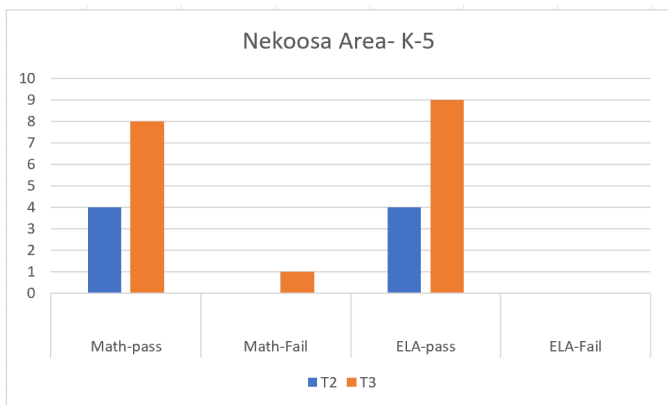


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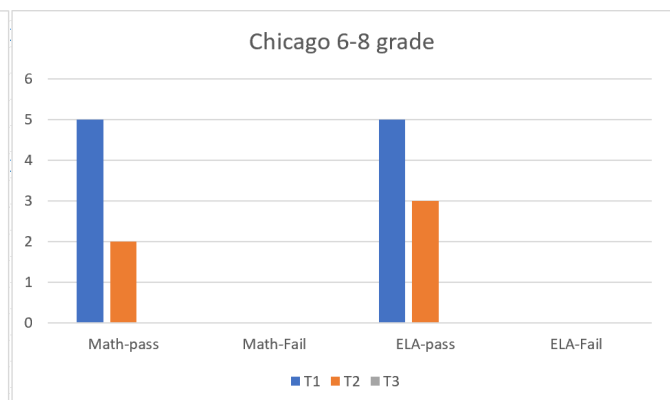
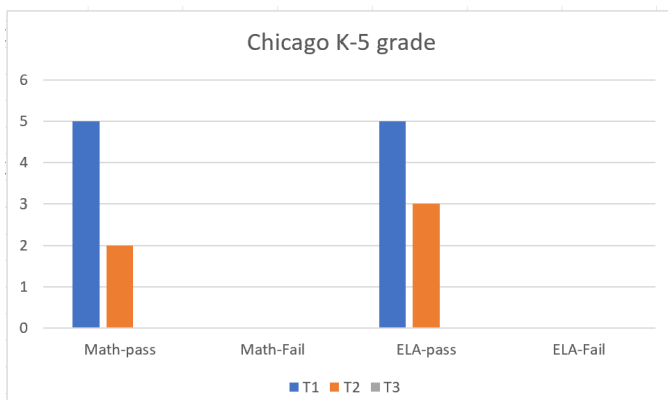
Milwaukee



Nekoosa



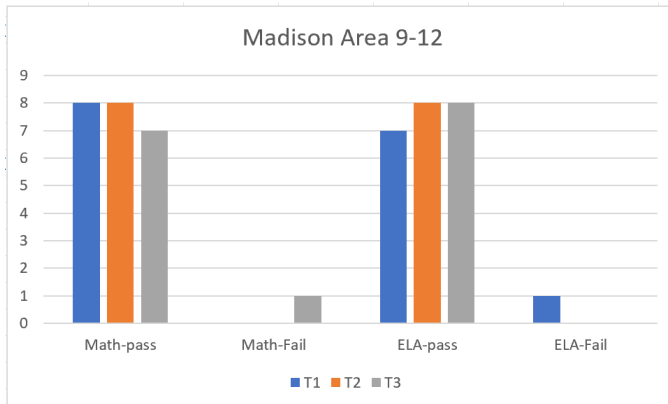
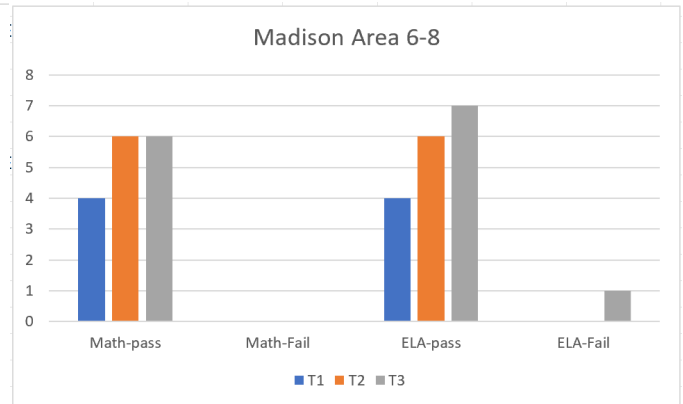
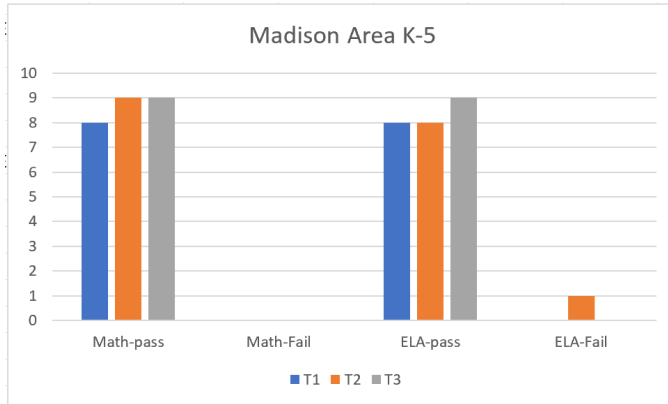
Chicago





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Madison



Madison also works with 4 post-secondary students, who passed all semester courses.



Head Start Division

Submitted by: Laurel Meek, Head Start Division Manager

Center Locations

- Ahuco (Tomah) Center
- Neenk Chunk Gra (Dells) Center
- Ho Chunk Gra (Mission) Center
- Wipamen Ker Da (Wittenberg) Center
- Puzaki Pei Cinak (Sandpillow) Center
- Chahk Ha Chee (Nekoosa) Center

Head Start Staff

- 34 Full Time Staff
- 8 Quarter-Time Staff

Dates of Operation

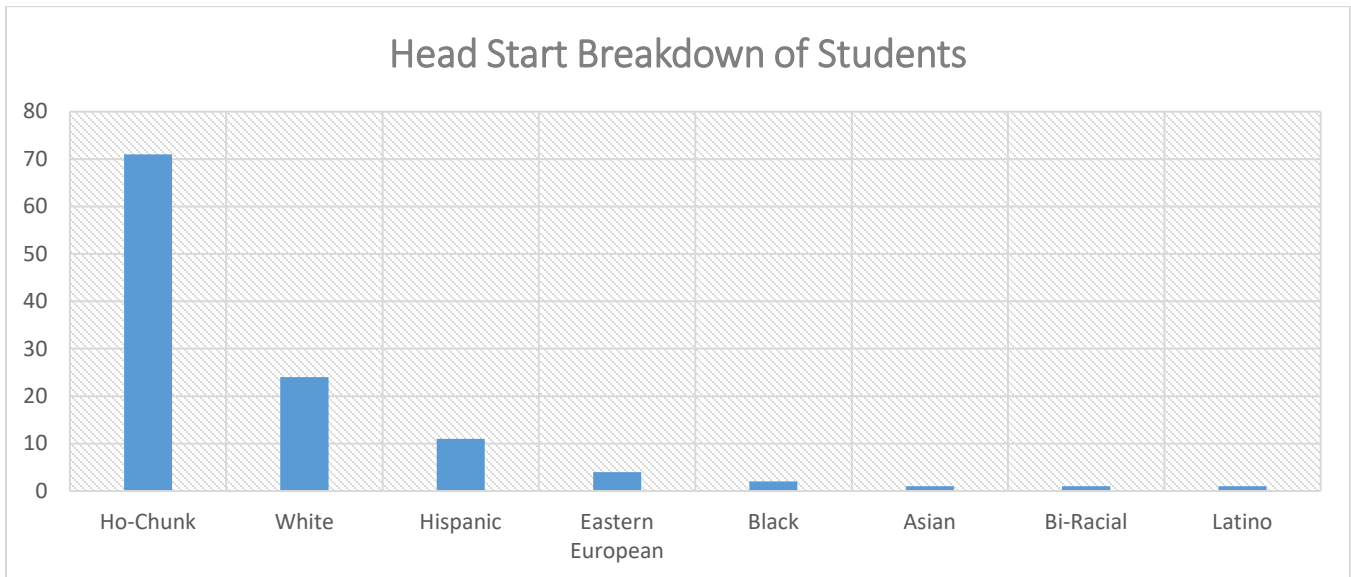
August 26, 2024 thru June 5, 2025

Program Capacity

- 110 Federal
- 10 State
- 120 Total

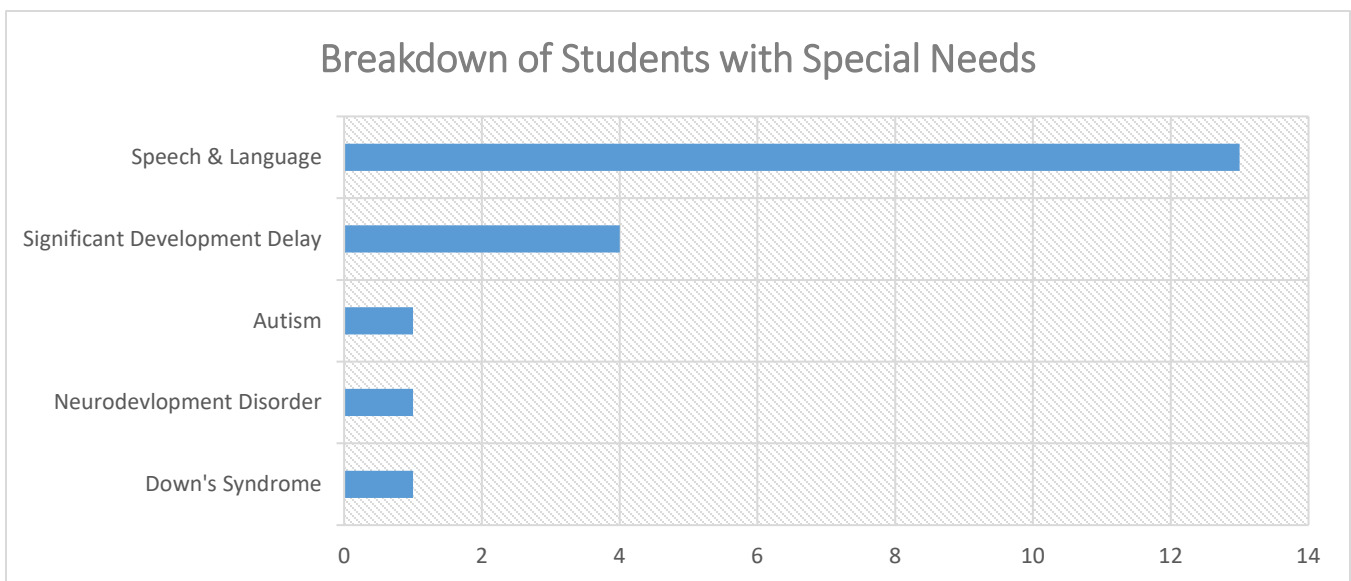
Children Served 2024/25 School Year: 115 Breakdown of Students

- 71 Ho-Chunk
- 4 Eastern European
- 11 Hispanic
- 2 African American
- 1 Asian
- 24 Caucasian
- 1 Bi-Racial
- 1 Latino



Students with Special Needs

- 20 Students Identified
 - 13 Speech and Language
 - 4 Significant Developmental Delay
 - 1 Down Syndrome
 - 1 Neurodevelopment Disorder
 - 1 Autism





Eligibility Criteria

75 Income and Categorically Eligible Students Served

Of the 75 Students:

- 23 below 100% of the poverty line
- 2 SSI or TANF recipients
- 10 Foster Children
- 2 Homeless families
- 38 SNAP recipients
- **40 Over Income Students Served**

Service

- 159 Days of Instruction
- 100% participation in Parent Orientation Days
- 2 Home Visits per Family 3 Parent/Teacher Conferences
- 12 Policy Council Meetings
- 9 Local Parent Committee Meetings per Center
- 3 Health Services Advisory Committee Meetings per Center
- 3 Health Services Advisory Committee Meeting (next meeting is (Date TBD))
- Governance Training Provided to Policy Council Legislature, and Chief Compliance Officer Office of the President
- ERSEA Training provided to Staff, Policy Council, Legislature, and Chief Compliance Officer Office of the President
- Parent Training Requests
- Literacy Events (Prior to March 31)
- Multiple Field Trip Experiences
- Family Festivals/Celebrations
- Many individual services on the request of families including but not limited to:
 - Job skill training
 - Resume writing assistance
 - Budgeting
 - Tax preparation assistance
 - Budget friendly, healthy meal preparation



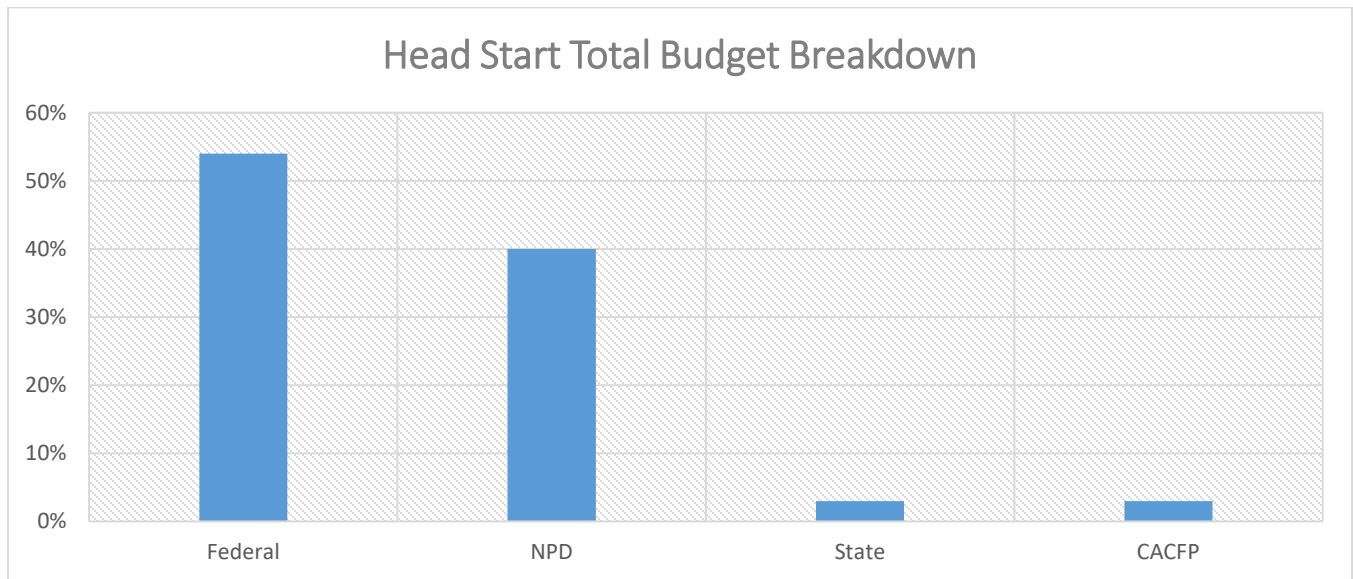
Health Information

(Of the 115 Children Served)

Of the 115:

- 112 with Immunizations
- 3 with a Waiver of Immunization
- 103 are complete and up to date
- 9 are in progress to that end
- 3 Waiver of Immunization
- 103 Students with completed Dental Examinations
- 103 Students with completed Physical Examinations
- 109 Students with completed Vision Screenings
- 101 Students with completed Hearing Screenings
- 1 Refusal
- 3 Unable to test

Funding



Mission Statement

The Ho-Chunk Nation Head Start Program embraces each family’s individuality and nurtures each child to grow intellectually, physically, social, emotionally, culturally, and spiritually.



Accomplishments during the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year

1. This year has presented us with many challenges!
 - a. The Biden administration put out a great deal of change with the Program Performance Standards, and many new mandates all of which were unfunded. True to Head Start form, we have implemented them by working hard, locating free services to meet the requirements, and creatively including them in our already busy schedule.
 - b. Then came the Federal Review (FA2), which included review of the brand new requirements. We had 3 Key Staff out for medical issues, but despite that we nailed it! While there were a couple of things that needed to be addressed, they have been fixed, again with hard work from the team and the work of our partners, and at the end of the day, it was a win!
 - c. Then came the Trump Administration. Grants were in question, rumors of the elimination of Head Start, etc...but again with a lot of hard work and advocating for the necessity of Head Start, here we are! The budget did NOT eliminate Head Start! We are funded for the new year, at the same level as last year with no COLA, but we have been notified that we are eligible to apply for the next 5 year Continuation Grant!
 - d. This rendition of the events is quite simplified, but suffice it to say we are proud to be here, and standing strong!
2. We have brought our Head Start application process into this century, and very much simplified the application and the process!
3. The kiddo's showed incredible growth throughout the year! You will see the Growth Outcomes data attached! They are amazing!
4. We have successfully completed the federal continuation grant for 2025-2026 and we have been awarded the funding.
5. We continue implementation of the changes that have come as part of the grant training received, and as such annually train Staff, Policy Council, and the Governing body on the ERSEA requirements, Head Start Finance and Program Governance.
6. The 25/26 State Grant is completed, and submitted, to the DCF. We await the Notice of award.
7. Prior to the start of the 2024-2025 school year, the twenty fourth Annual Family Orientation to the Head Start Program was offered to all of the new and returning families. Opportunities were offered for those who attended to understand; the Head Start Standards, what to expect during the year, become familiar with the policies and procedures of Head Start, receive the calendar for the year, understand the Policy Council and its' functions, and have an opportunity to meet the staff. Once again it was a huge success with 100% of the families participating.
8. The Head Start Program provided training and technical assistance for the Policy Council, as to their role within Head Start Program. The Policy Council made up of Parents and Community Members; assisted in decision making for policy and procedure making, budgeting, grant writing, enrollment, hiring, program self-assessment, and general problem solving for the Program. An information session was additionally offered to the Ho-Chunk Nation Legislature as the Governing Body.
9. It is our plan to continue to train as many for as little as we can for the upcoming year, as was the case this year. We offered several very relevant trainings: Teaching Strategies Gold, CPR and



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First Aide, Safety, Sanitation, Bus Monitor, Transportation, further review of State and Federal standards as changes occurred, math, science and literacy training, fiscal accountability, and the ins and outs of writing behavioral intervention plans. Staff had the opportunity to attend the NAEYC and the WHSA conference as funding allowed. We additionally worked on teambuilding and the systems approach to the Head Start Program. We implemented a Mental Health component for staff, with gatherings twice per month, following the planning stage. We continue with implementation of the Practice Based Coaching model of professional development for our teachers, and will be establishing new teaching goals for the kick off of the 2025-2026 school year, as guided by our outcomes.

10. To date, in all of our service areas, we have been fortunate to have a group of volunteers come into the centers and read to the children one time per month. What is extra special about their visits is that each of the children is given a copy of the book along with a worksheet to involve the family in this literacy project. The children then receive nine (9) new books every year. This project will continue at least through next year. We look forward to another successful year with this project.
11. An emergency action plan continues to be updated and utilized in order to universalize the handling of all potential hazards to include intruders.

Other items of interest that are in progress:

- Of particular note, the Ahuco playground will be completed this summer, with huge thanks to the Legislature for their financial support for this project!
- Also of particular note, the driveways and parking area of the Mission Head Start will be re-done this summer, with huge thanks to Transportation!
- All centers will be deep cleaned during the upcoming summer months and annual maintenance will be completed.
- All busses will be state inspected, cleaned and regularly disinfected.
- We are in “full on preparation” mode for the start of the new year...making sure we have screening and orientation materials prepared and organized, scheduling well child checks and dental examinations, making sure all required documents are properly filed, preparing for the 3-day pre-service training for staff, planning bus routing, and of course preparing our educational goals for the year, and making sure our classrooms are stocked with consumable supplies for the year (these are the tip of the iceberg) components to a successful school year)!
- Of course this time of year marks “reporting time” for our funding sources, so we will be busy getting those completed and submitted.
- Our federal grant began on April 1, 2025, and of course we are already working on the Federal grant for the 2026/2027 school year, due in Washington D.C. by December 31, 2025.
- We will be applying for the CACFP grant, as soon as the notification of application arrives.

Challenges and Corrective Actions

- The Federal budget, as mentioned previously, is funded at the same level as the previous year, so there is no COLA grant being offered this year to assist in offsetting the cost of the Nation’s COLA.



7/31/25

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- The Ahuco center needs new windows. We have a little extra State funds and are hopeful that at least the classroom windows will be replaced this summer. The challenge has been getting contractors to return our calls.
- The world of Head Start is always changing! All change can be challenging, however, that is not to say that it isn't worthwhile!



Long Range Goals, Objectives and Program Impacts

GOAL: The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will steadily, over the five-year grant period, increase the level of parent involvement in their child's education, and educational opportunities and events for parent development, as measured by numbers in attendance at each opportunity, each event, and attendance at parent/teacher conferences, IEP meetings, and volunteer hours.

OBJECTIVE: To effectively tailor events and trainings based upon family goals, to schedule parent/teacher conferences based upon parent availability, enhance parent opportunities to be involved in goal setting for their children, and to increase opportunities for parents to volunteer with activities in the Head Start Centers.

PROGRAM IMPACT/ACTION PLAN:

1. Establish a Center specific spreadsheet of events, trainings, parent/teacher conference, and volunteer hours, in which parent attendance will be tracked, to establish whether attendance/participation is increased over the course of the five-year grant period.
2. Share the results bi-annually with all staff to determine the effectiveness of our efforts.
3. If results are not meeting our expectations of increasing parent involvement, evaluate the barriers that may be impeding parents' ability to be involved.
4. Revise the plans based upon the data and barriers.

RESPONSIBLE PERSONS: All Head Start Staff

TIMELINE: September-June

DOCUMENTATION: All Staff In-Service Training Sign in Sheets/Agendas Center Specific Spreadsheets



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GOAL: **The Opioid crisis in our area is reaching epidemic proportions, and is affecting parents, children and extended family. In order to begin to address this epidemic the Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will establish a program for parents to educate them on the realities of drug use, and work with the Ho-Chunk Health Department to provide accurate educational material. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will additionally establish developmentally appropriate prevention learning objectives for children.**

OBJECTIVE: To increase awareness of the dangers and health impacts of drug use, and make children and families aware of healthy alternatives to drug use.

PROGRAM IMPACT/ACTION PLAN:

1. Track the type of educational opportunities for parents by center.
2. Track the number of educational opportunities for parents by center.
3. Track the number and type of healthy alternatives provided for families by the Ho-Chunk Head Start Program.
4. Review with staff biannually at all Staff In-Service Training.

RESPONSIBLE PERSONS: Family and Community Partnership Coordinators
Teaching Staff
Health/Nutrition/Safety/Transportation Coordinator
Head Start Director

TIMELINE: August-June

DOCUMENTATION: Tracking Sheets
In-Service Agenda
In-Service Sign in Sheets



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GOAL: **During the course of the five year grant period, the Ho-Chunk Head Start program will not meet any of the seven conditions, as required by the Head Start Act.**

OBJECTIVE: To maintain compliance with all standards to prevent re-compete status.

ACTION PLAN:

1. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will maintain the highest level of health and safety standards.
2. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will establish goals for improving the school readiness of all children.
3. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will maintain all state licensing requirements, with no jeopardy of forfeitures.
4. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will maintain the highest level of nutritional programming, to prevent audit findings from the CACFP reimbursement grant.
5. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will not have any deficiencies noted in any federal monitoring event.
6. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will show continuous progression towards excellence, as identified by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System.
7. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will have no scores on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System that place us in the lowest 10% of scores in the nation.
8. The Ho-Chunk Head Start Program will maintain full fiscal compliance as noted by annual internal audits, Federal audits, and CACFP audits, as to prevent suspension or debarment of any grant.

RESPONSIBLE PERSONS: ALL Head Start Staff

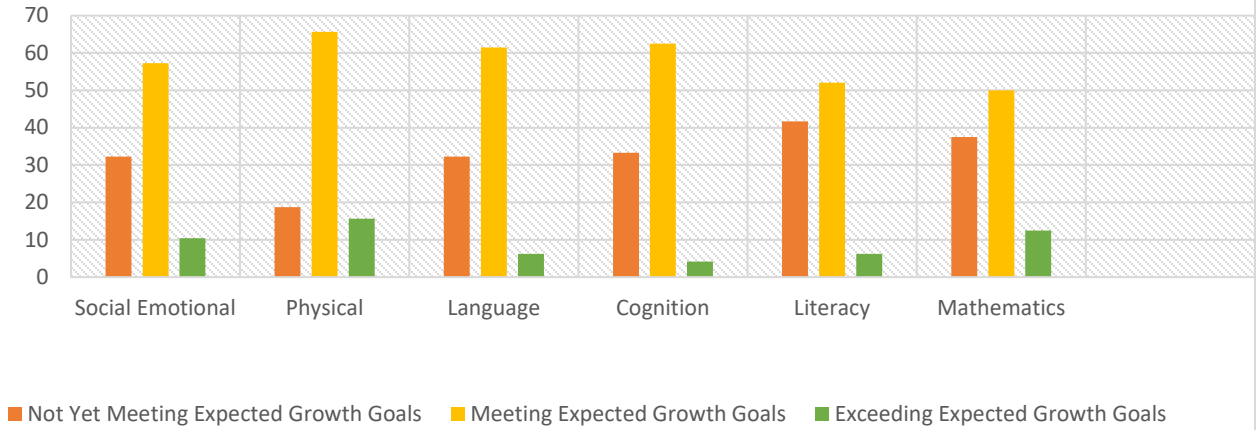
TIMELINE: September-May

DOCUMENTATION: Licensing Compliance Reports
 Audit outcomes reports
 Environmental Services Safety and Sanitation reports
 Department of Labor Occupational Safety Inspection reports

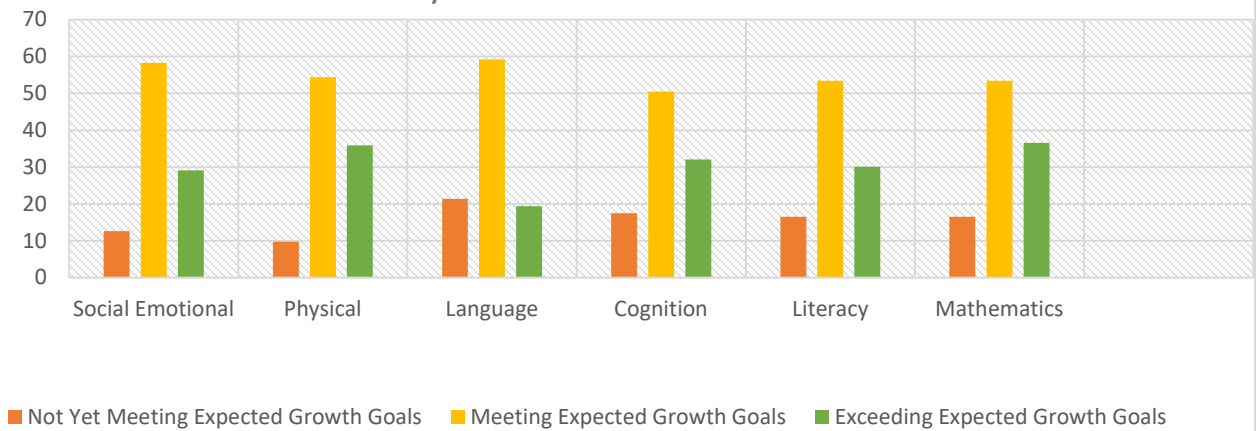


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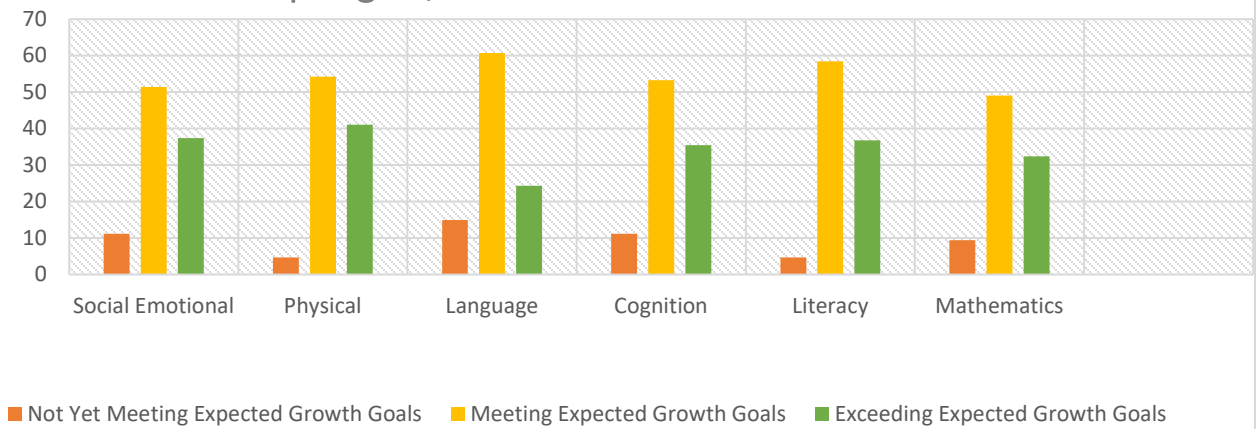
Fall 2024 Baseline Child Outcomes



Winter 24/25 Child Growth Outcomes



Spring 24/25 Child Growth Outcomes





OBJECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors
 - a. *Manages feelings*
 - b. *Follows limits and expectations*
 - c. *Takes care of own needs appropriately*
2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships
 - a. *Forms relationships with adults*
 - b. *Responds to emotional cues*
 - c. *Interacts with peers*
 - d. *Makes friends*
3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
 - a. *Balances needs and rights of self and others*
 - b. *Solves social problems*

PHYSICAL

1. Demonstrates traveling skills
2. Demonstrates balancing skills
3. Demonstrates gross-motor manipulative skills
4. Demonstrates fine-motor strength and coordination
 - a. *Uses fingers and hands*
 - b. *Uses writing and drawing tools*

LANGUAGE

1. Listens to and understands the increasingly complex language
 - a. *Comprehends language*
 - b. *Follows directions*
2. Uses language to express thoughts and needs
 - a. *Uses an expanding expressive vocabulary*
 - b. *Speaks clearly*
 - c. *Uses conventional grammar*
 - d. *Tells about another time or place*
3. Uses appropriate conversational and other communication skills
 - a. *Engages in conversations*
 - b. *Uses social rules of language*

COGNITIVE

1. Demonstrates positive approach to learning
 - a. *Attends and engages*
 - b. *Persists*
 - c. *Solves problems*
 - d. *Shows curiosity and motivation*

- e. *Shows flexibility and inventiveness in thinking*
2. Remembers and connects experiences
 - a. *Recognizes and recalls*
 - b. *Makes connections*
 3. Uses classification skills
 4. Uses symbols and images to represent something not present
 - a. *Thinks symbolically*
 - b. *Engages in sociodramatic play*

LITERACY

1. Demonstrates phonological awareness
 - a. *Notifies and discriminates rhyme*
 - b. *Notifies and discriminates alliteration*
 - c. *Notifies and discriminates smaller and smaller units of sound*
2. Demonstrates knowledge of the alphabet
 - a. *Identifies and names letters*
 - b. *Uses letter-sound knowledge*
3. Demonstrates knowledge of print and its uses
 - a. *Uses and appreciates books*
 - b. *Uses print concepts*
4. Comprehends and responds to books and other texts
 - a. *Interacts during read-aloud and book conversations*
 - b. *Uses emergent reading skills*
 - c. *Retells stories*
5. Demonstrates emergent writing skills
 - a. *Writes name*
 - b. *Writes to convey meaning*

MATHEMATICS

1. Uses number concepts and operations
 - a. *Counts*
 - b. *Quantifies*
 - c. *Connects numerals with their quantities*
2. Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
 - a. *Understands spatial relationships*
 - b. *Understands shapes*
 - c. *Compares and measures*
 - d. *Demonstrates knowledge of patterns*

**Additionally, the following goals will continue to be implemented:**

- The Head Start staff will continue use of a new assessment system, Teaching Strategies Gold, and we will continue to address any gaps in knowledge in the use thereof.
- Together with the Health Services Advisory Committee, we continue to seek an appropriate curriculum and training materials on the realities of drug use, and choosing healthy lifestyles, for our families.
- We will continue working very hard to get our fathers and other significant male role models involved as we have learned some significant statistics about the importance of their involvement in their child's education and later life success. Of course we will continue what we are doing, as we have awesome father involvement already. We also have awesome mother and significant female role model involvement, and are hoping that we are able to maintain and improve on that as well, in the upcoming year.
- Communication between staff continues to increase via continuous improvement in the quality of the in-service training's during the year. The content is based on the new, more detailed, monthly ongoing monitoring reports. Requiring attendance at these trainings, requiring accountability for the information shared, making staff a part of problem solving, and making them a part of planning and decision making, has made this a stronger program. As such this strategy will continue in the upcoming year.
- We will continue to focus our professional development efforts on teacher effectiveness in the classroom.
- We will be working with environmental services to brainstorm further unmet safety needs of our children and families, and work to provide additional services.

Alternative Funding Sources

- Federal Grant
- State Grant
- CACFP Reimbursement Grant
- Buckle up for Life Grant
- Dental Prevention Grant
- DPI-4K

Community Partners

- All School Districts in each service area
- Area Birth to 3 Programs
- All County/Health and Human Services Agencies in each service area
- Ho-Chunk Nation Health Department
- Community Health Nurses and Community Health Representatives
- HCN Department of Environmental Health
- HCN Department of Labor
- Wisconsin Book Worms Literacy Project



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- Dental Health Project
- Ho-Chunk Nation Nutritionist
- Ho-Chunk Nation Dietician
- Lion's Club
- 4K
- HCN Maintenance Department
- UW-Extension Programs
- Edgewood College Nurses
- My First Book
- CESA (Cooperative Educational Services Agency of Wisconsin)
- Domtar



Disabilities Division

Submitted by: Cheryl Funmaker, Disability Division Manager

Accomplishments

Special Education serves students with disabilities via the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004. The field acknowledges and works to improve poor academic and transition outcomes, particularly for historically marginalized groups such as American Indians.

15.3% of American Indian students are served under IDEA. According to HCN enrollment, the nation serves 1400 students under the age of 18, with 1200 of those students located within the state of Wisconsin. Applying the national metrics, approximately 214 HCN students are likely to receive IEP special education services.

Demographics

Year to date IEP numbers for the division are as follows:

Area 1: 36 students **Area 2:** 50 students **Area 3:** 19 students **Area 4:** 5 students

Total of 110 students for AY 2024-2025

To date 44 HCN families participate in family events with some overlap of IEP support. Typical numbers for total students serve annually range from 110-135 students. Applying the national metrics to eligible families, the division supports 51-74% of HCN students receiving special education.

Case Types

Annual IEP support	Intensive IEP support	Higher Education
504 eligibility	Transition referrals	HYF accommodations
Consults	IEP initial eligibility	Dispute
Manifestation	Expulsion	Wrap-Around CCS Review/Revise
Change of Placement	Re-Evaluation	

Goals and Strategies

The Ho-Chunk Nation (HCN) Educational Disabilities Division implements an outreach program to promote parental involvement, support family advocacy, and improve transition processes for HCN members with disabilities. Programmatic goals remain the same: supporting families in the special education process, partnering with agencies to provide learning opportunities, and providing resources/guidance during the transition from school-based services to adulthood.



Individual Education Plans

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legally mandates that parents are full members of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team wherein parents serve as an accountability mechanism to ensure their child receives appropriate services and supports. The field documents however, that a majority of families benefit most from expertise in order to leverage and maximize an IEP for their child. The Disability Division prioritizes and attends IEPs for this top requested support of HCN families.

Training and Presentations

The special education field is difficult to navigate as it is technical and expansive across the education, medical, and community agencies. Mindful of this depth and breadth, the division provides training for HCN programs for families and employees. The division also presents statewide to advocate for culturally responsive topics to service providers working with tribal children and families.

Family Events

It is essential that Tribal families receive information and resources from people they know and trust. Through the Families Supporting Families project (a collaboration between the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction), Ho-Chunk Nation and their partner LOV, Inc. have identified effective ways to connect families to each other and to information: family retreats and a family navigator. The family retreats give families the chance to come together for social connection and support, learn about resources, and problem solve. The Family Navigator is a Tribal member from the community with lived experience with disability. The navigator gets to know families, shares resources with them, and when they are ready, walks them through the process of accessing a program or support.

Data from the Families Supporting Families project shows that when people take time to develop relationships and offer support in culturally relevant ways, trust in services and systems begins to grow. In the first year of the project, families felt reticent about accessing services. However, in the second year, 91% of families (32 out of 35 families) reported knowing about new services they were eligible for and 17 families signed up for the Children's Long-Term Support waiver. This is a substantial and exciting increase.

Alternative Funding

The division and by extension the HCN have enjoyed a singular collaborative relationship with DPI and BPDD, as illustrated in the following numbers. Recent changes in the wider landscape may impact this program component.

Outside funds for family events to date:

- 2017: \$ 15,000 (DPI TIG)
- 2018: \$40,000 (DPI AIPIP)
- 2019: \$30,000 (BPDD)
- 2020: \$30,000 (BPDD) + \$10,000 (DHS Vaccine)



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- 2021: \$50,000 (BPDD/DPI) + \$25,000 (DRW Vaccine)
- 2022: \$50,000 (BPDD/DPI)
- 2023: \$50,000 (BPDD/DPI)
- 2024: \$50,000 (BPDD/DPI) + \$37,500 (Inclusa Foundation)
- 2025: \$37,500 (Inclusa Foundation) + \$30,000 (BPDD/DPI)

TOTAL GRANTS: \$415,000

Agency Collaborations

- Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities WIBPDD
- Department of Health Services DHS Department of Public Instruction DPI
- Disability Rights Wisconsin DRWI
- LOVINC Madison
- Wisconsin State Parent Education Initiative (WSPEI)
- Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHCN)



Culture and Community Education Division

Submitted by: Michelle Cloud, Culture and Community Education Division Manager

Mission Statement

The mission of the Culture and Community Education division is to create new education pathways to learn and sustain Indigenous holistic cultural health and knowledge, provide community members the tools and information to be financially literate, create gender fair, multi-culturally equitable, socioeconomically aware, globally informed education, and provide environmental education programs that promote stewardship of the environment. We will develop lifelong learning practices and long-term sustainable and resilient tribal communities.

Accomplishments during the fiscal year

S.E.E.D. Seeking Educational Equity & Diversity

The National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum is a year-long seminar that engages teachers, parents, and community leaders from all geographic locations to create a gender fair, multi-culturally equitable, socioeconomically aware, and globally informed education. The goal of this initiative is to provide S.E.E.D. as a professional development tool for school district staff in order to positively impact school climate for all students as well as for community members who are interested in engaging in conversations that matter to us all.

The thirteenth year of providing S.E.E.D. seminars in-person and online resulted in 35 local educators and community members trained in social justice concepts through courageous conversations focused on race, white privilege, equity, gender, and ability, among other topics.

The summer SEED Leadership Intensive was held in August 2024 in the Wisconsin Rapids school district with 20 teachers, support staff, and community members attending. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Indigenous Arts & Sciences (IAS)

The division's collaboration with UW-Madison Earth Partnership provides Goja Howaite Hi (Going on Continuously) Indigenous Arts & Sciences summer programming for high school age Ho-Chunk youth. Twelve Ho-Chunk students attended the 10th annual Goja Howaite Hi youth environmental science camp and they learned about the intersectionality of Ho-Chunk culture and science. The theme of each day reflects Ho-Chunk culture with the opening remarks provided by a tribal elder.

The primary accomplishment of the IAS program was the development of culturally relevant lesson plans that focused on the Ho-Chunk worldview, Foraging, and the Life Cycle of Deer. The curriculum development team consisted of Tribal elders, community members, and division staff. The lessons are being compiled into a booklet that includes lessons from three Tribal Nations, who are partners in the UW-Madison collaborative.



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Grants

The Ruth Foundation for the Arts grant completed its first year of providing community-based culturally relevant learning opportunities. One of the primary goals is to produce durable teaching resources and materials for our communities. The collaborative grant with the Department of Heritage Preservation Cultural Resources Division and the Museum will offset the wages for three tribal employees and is funded at \$200,000 for two years.

The division collaboratively applied for and received a Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Youth Initiative (TYI) grant along with the Nation's Youth Services and Department of Natural Resources. The focus of the youth program will be on career readiness in the natural resources field.

We received a grant from the Natural Resources Foundation that supported one of the Goja Howaite Hi service-learning projects for the youth that focused on expanding the pollinator garden behind District One Community Center. The second service-learning project focused on elk monitoring, led by the Nation's DNR staff during the 2024-2025 school year.

New Beginnings for Tribal Students (NBTS)

The NBTS grant helped to offset the wages of a staff member to teach at the field course during the summer of 2025. The grant is a collaboration between the division, UW-Madison, and two tribal colleges. One of the goals is to providing cultural learning exchange in partnership with UW and Tribal Colleges for post-secondary students.

Financial Literacy

The Ho-Chunk Nation Legislature prioritized the expansion of the program to meet state standards and work began to meet the goal. Students accessed the online program to begin their learning journey and could successfully complete the program by passing the final exam. The data proves that students have experienced a tremendous learning curve for financial literacy concepts in fourteen tutorials.

The project manager attended eight trainings and/or community outreach events throughout the year.

The issue of racially based incidents continues to occur in local school districts, most notably in the Baraboo school district, and the division has responded by once again providing SEED in that school district as a result of the Department's Equity Group team meetings with Baraboo.

Ho-Chunk civics course

Development of course content continues in the area of Ho-Chunk history, including the removals of the Ho-Chunk people, the complex kinship system, Ho-Chunk constitution and foraging for medicinal and edible plants. The lessons are being developed by a team of tribal elders and community members who have significant cultural knowledge and experience with the focus of the lessons.



Problems and corrective actions taken

The National Science Foundation Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) grant was terminated on April 25, 2025, which adversely impacts the wages of one of the staff. In response, the collaborative partnership with UW-Madison applied for and received the Spencer Foundation Rapid Response grant. The funds will be used to continue work toward three project goals and to fund the wages of one IAS Grant Manager. Additional funding sources are being identified that will allow for the IAS program to continue into the future.

For the first year since 2012, due to low interest, a SEED group was not provided in the school district of Black River Falls. This is especially troubling, considering Ho-Chunk students make up nearly 25% of the BRF school district student population. In response, we offered an inaugural virtual spring SEED class, which was positively received, but the class did not have one BRF educator or staff member present, except for the nationally trained SEED facilitator, who works for the BRF school district.

Goals and strategies for the next fiscal year

Financial Literacy: With the support of Financial Fitness Group / iGrad, the financial literacy program will meet the new Wisconsin state standards in effect in fall of 2025 with the updated program available in the near year.

Indigenous Arts & Sciences: With the collaborative grant with HCN Youth Services and DNR, the IAS focused programming will transition to a natural resources career readiness path for Ho-Chunk youth.

Seeking Educational Equity & Diversity: The division will expand the SEED program to school districts who have not participated in the program previously and provide virtual class offerings in the fall and spring semesters.

Ho-Chunk Civics Course: The inaugural offering of the course will be available online in late fall of 2025.

Alternative funding sources and partnerships

Our collaboration with UW-Madison and Tribal Colleges within the state as well as our willingness to devote valuable time to grant writing has resulted in several grants that promote valuable cultural learning opportunities, and generate engagement and success for our Ho-Chunk youth, families, and community members. We are in the process of applying for a collaborative grant with the Nation's DNR that focuses on hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation for community members.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle R. Cloud, Division Manager
Culture & Community Education



Hoocak Ee Coonj Wažiperes Hocira

Submitted by: Mary Thundercloud-Eary, Hoocak Ee Coonj Wažiperes Hocira Division Manager

Accomplishments during the Prior Fiscal Year

- Turned in the end of year evaluation of the Department of Public Instruction Grant for Early Childhood Indigenous Languages Grant
- Updated the policies and procedures for the Parent Hand Book for 2024-2025 school year
- Parent Orientation for the 2024-2025 School year on September 11, 2024
- Parents orientated at the September Parent Gathering and filled out all the paperwork for licensing by the state of Wisconsin
- Parents and Staff took his/her preassessment of the Hoocak language at the September Parent Gathering
- Opened Hoocak Ee Coonj Wažiperes Hocira with the Administrator, one Teacher Assistant, Cook/Maintenance, and the Hoocak Language Instructor II/Lead Teacher for the 2024-2025 School year on September 18, 2024.
- Visit from the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families Licensing Specialist in September, October, and May 2024
- Order first mandated class, Introduction to the Child Care Profession for the new Teacher Assistant on September 30, 2024
- Administrator and Teacher Assistants applied to the Registry
- Hired a new Teacher Assistant on October 7, 2024
- New Teacher Assisted was orientated at Hoocak Ee Cooni in October
- Teacher Assisted took her mandated reporter class, SIDS Training, First Aid, AED, Infant
- Advertised in August in the Worak for 4 month to 2 year old children to enroll at Hoocak Ee Coonj for the 2024-2025 school year
- During the school year 7 babies/preschoolers on Monday and Tuesday, and 6 babies/preschoolers on Wednesday and Thursday
- Administrator is a part of a cohort of a 5 team member for Kaleidoscope
- Administrator is part of the cohort to write a prenatal to three grant for the global majority children and families for the state of Wisconsin and the application will be through the Pritzker Foundation
- Donation was made to Hoocak Ee Coonj and a restricted account was created by Treasury and approved by the Legislature
- Maintained the building indoors and outdoors – refreshed some of the paint on the walls indoors and painted the exterior blue
- Cook/Maintenance added more word wall pictures to the playground area.
- Cook/Maintenance added more grass turf to the playground so infants could crawl on the ground
- Cook/Maintenance added 2 canopy tarps over sections on the playground to shield the sun
- Cook/Maintenance planted 2 cedar scrubs and 2 lilacs bushes on the property.
- Cook/Maintenance boxed in more areas surrounding the building with landscape timbers and mulch 2' - 3' around most of the building.



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- Up-graded some of the kitchen tools and supplies.
- Continued to work with staff on Hoocak board books with remaining funds.
- Continue weekly menu planning for variety and nutrition with an emphasis on preparing fresh and balanced meals that use healthy and nutritious foods from scratch that avoids highly processed foods for the staff and children on a regular basis.
- Continued to maintain a clean and safe environment by following all sanitation guidelines to keep the kitchen clean and prevent contamination.
- Continued general maintenance tasks such as: Checking playground equipment for safety hazards (loose bolts, broken pieces); emptying trash bins and replacing liners throughout the facility; testing smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms; maintaining landscaping (mowing, trimming, weeding); keeping fire track of fire drills and tornado drills on a monthly
- Painted the building blue
- Added applique patterns on the corners of the building and painted them with accent colors
- Maintained the grounds by adding 4" small pebbles and 1" rubber padding over it
- Added a mural and word panel boards to shed and garage.
- Enrolled in Education Education Station and staff completed 2 classes
- Teacher Assistant completed two mandated required classes
- Worked on developing curriculum for 2024-2025 School year in the Hoocak language
- Lesson examples for the 2024-2025 were; Healthy foods, leaf patterns, pumpkins, the animal the badger, skeletons, ghost handprints, Frankenstein, picture frames, turkeys, deer antler headpieces, hand prints, Christmas trees, snow globes, stockings, mittens, bear in a den, hearts, dinosaur hats, snowmen, fish, rabbits, eggs, world Earth Day, rainbow cloud craft, planting seeds, painted clay pots for Mother's Day, Birds, caterpillars,
- Professional Development for the staff and they attended the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health Conference, Wisconsin Indian Education Conference, and Early Childhood Connection Conference
- The Language Division sent an apprentice to assist and to learn the language and she worked 400 hours at the Ee Coonj
- Parents and Staff took their pre-assessment, midyear, and post assessment for the 2024-2025 school year, and overall the scores steadily increased
- Parent Hoocak language classes were offered on Zoom for beginning speakers on Tuesday at 6:00 pm, Wednesday at 6:30 for parents who are more advanced in understanding the language and in person on Friday mornings at Hoocak Ee Coonj at 9:30 am.
- The Administrator and Teacher Assistants enrolled in the Pathway's classes through the Ho-Chunk Academy during the 2024-2025 school year



Accomplishments based on the department/division FY 2023/2024 goals and strategies.

Hoocak Ee Coonj Goals and Strategies for the 2024-2025 Fiscal Budget Year	Accomplished Goals by the end of 2024-2025
Increase enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year.	Increased by 2 children on Mon/Tuesday and 1 child on Wed/Thurs
Distribute the Hoocak Ee Coonj Early Childhood board books to the D1 Library	Thirty books were delivered and taken to the opening of the D1 Building in September
Distribute a set of Hoocak Ee Coonj Early Childhood board books to the 6 Head Starts	Still in progress. Wanted to have a roll out celebration and publish the story in the Worak – story sent to the Worak and not yet published.
Distribute a set of Hoocak Ee Coonj Early Childhood board books to the Indian Community School	Still in progress. Wanted to have a roll out celebration and publish the story in the Worak – story sent to the Worak and not yet published

Problems and Corrective Actions

Problems at Hoocak Ee Coonj	Corrective Actions for Hoocak Ee Coonj
Teacher Assistant resigned 2 weeks before the start of 2024-2025 school year	Hired a new Teacher Assistant on October 7, 2024
Low enrollment of 4 month to 2 year old toddlers	Advertised and 2 more families enrolled with their infants during the 2024-2025 school year.
Baby who attended the Center had Covid and exposed others to it.	Closed Ee Cooni for 2 days to clean and sanitize. No other outbreak occurred with any other baby/preschooler
Low turnout of parents at monthly gatherings	Changed the time of the gathering from 12 to 2:00 to 2:00 to 4:00 and more families attended.
Parents unable to attend Friday morning Hoocak classes	Added another Zoom class on Tuesday night for beginner Hoocak classes and kept Wednesday night for a more advanced class



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Goals and Strategies for the next fiscal year, FY 2024/2025

- Increase enrollment at Hooçąk Ee Cooni for the school year
- Take weekly attendance at Hooçąk language class on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday morning
- Keep track of the daily attendance of the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- Keep track of the preassessment, midyear and post assessment of the parents and staff
- Attend at least one conference or visit to a Native Learning Center/Daycare

Alternative funding sources and partnerships for FY 2023/2024

- Great Lakes Intertribal Early Childhood Program
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA)
- United Childcare Providers of Sauk County
- 4 C's of Madison
- Early Childhood Tribal Training (WTTC Wisconsin Early Childhood)
- Kaleidoscope
- Department of Public Instruction if there are other offerings for materials, books, grants, Professional Development Trainings, and resources



Waakšik Pij Hiruŕja Kij – The Good Life Program

Submitted by: Barbara Blackdeer-Mackenzie, Good Life Program Division Manager

Accomplishments during the prior fiscal year

The biggest accomplishment this year has been opening our Ho-Chunk Public Library and Maker's Space. It is located at the District 1 Community Center in Black River Falls and has around 6000 books and games. In turn to support the library, the division was partly involved in writing, and now fully managing, Institute for Museum and Library Services grants. This helps pay for a library assistant, additional book shelves, and book purchases. We are always accepting books, games, fabric, crafts, notions, and outgrown and decent-repair regalia. Items can be delivered or shipped to N7261 Warrior Avenue, Black River Falls, WI 54615.

Other accomplishments include, programming in grant categories of events, guidance, and traditions courses that were offered in-person and virtually. The programming consisted of the following:

In-Person

Basketball skills camp was a two-day event with one day for 4 – 8 graders and the second for 9-12 graders. A total of 65 students attended on the two-one day camps. Students learned dribbling, passing, lay-ups, drills, and teamwork.

UW campus visits. A total of 65 students attended one visit or another to UW Madison, UW Green Bay, UW Milwaukee, and/ or UW Eau Claire. Students learned about services provided to Native American students, such as academic programs, students groups, financial aid, dorm life, campus atmosphere, and admissions requirements.

Heart Spirits: An Art Legacy Project had some challenges in the BRF School District. It is a program that uses art as an expression of grief over the lives that have been lost through unsolved missing and murder cases. The project tied closely with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR), and Missing and Murdered Ho-Chunk Relatives (MMHCR). This year's feature was to work with Red Creek Elementary Schools. Volunteers of the project read to students in the Red Creek classrooms. For fourth and fifth grade, the book read was, *If I Go Missing*, by Brianna Jonnie. The second and third grades were provided a downloadable book called, *Steps to Staying Safe Storybook* by the A21 Campaign, Incorporated. This book is available here for download: https://neutrinodata.s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/a21/userimages/A21_Steps_To_Staying_Safe_Storybook_PrintAtHome-USA.pdf

Talking Circles. Talking Circles were hosted at **BRF Middle School** throughout the school year. An average of 11 Native girls met weekly where they established community while discussing social and emotional topics such as friendship, prevention topics, and anti-bullying.

Talking Circles. Talking Circles were hosted at **BRF High School** throughout the school year. An average of 14 Native girls met weekly where they established community while discussing social and



emotional topics such as time management, completing required stuff before fun stuff, exercising good judgment, and safety.

Bear Writes Poetry events took place in BRF and Tomah. Sherman Funmaker shared his writings while helping students better understand poetry form and structure, writing, and his background as an author and upcoming projects.

BRF High School Art Club met mostly weekly and accomplished Jackie Traverse acrylic painting, wool animals and sewing basics, chain earrings, and parfleche (stiffened deer hide) earrings.

Teaching Twining. Jebette Sine instructed twelve students: eight adults and four high school students. Twining is an endangered art. It involves making twine from basswood or cedar trees (for class, jute was used) and twining the cord as weft and warp. Handmade looms were strung by participants. Students ended up with a second session in the fall with Jebette reviewing work, checking in on accomplishment, and covering how to weave specific patterns.



Photos by Barb Blackdeer-Mackenzie

Paaxge bead working. Twelve students attended the class where Gabrielle Rave was our instructor. She taught how to make a pattern, thread set up, wax, stringing and weaving the beads. She brought in pony bead examples as visual aids and over the course of the sessions, some students were able to complete their earrings and start on bracelets.

Cabochon beading classes. Cora Redbird and Melissa Stewart were the instructors of 15 students plus family members interested in trying the skill. All were issued a bead mat, thread, needles, cabochons, glue, stiffened felt, choice of seed beads, and plenty of brownie bites.



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Traditions Field Trip to Perrot State Park. Three families (about 15 people) were able to make the trip. A park guide and our in-house instructor, George Greendeer, brought the families to see Trempealeau Mountain and mounds at the state park. George is a natural storyteller, so the day was filled with his wisdom and it was a great experience for the families to be able to be at the site where the stories happened. As it was a culminating class, those who had participated were given a small beaded pouch from our program in thanks for being good students.

Traditions 101 Field Trip to Perrot State Park- ADA. On an alternate date, students who have particularly special needs came with their families to Perrot State Park to visit the mounds and hear stories about Trempealeau Mountain from George Greendeer.

Family Healing Camp 2024. Our Good Life team helped with child care. Some of the Good Life activities engaging the children included sun-printing art, Model Magic sculpturing, sewing leather unicorn purses, leading games, and the highlight of the afternoons was Coka Hushi (George Greendeer) telling the whole group stories. One day he told a creation story with lots of good messages like caring for one another and that we are all related. The second day was about the way the Baraboo Hills were formed.



George Greendeer telling a story to the 2024 Family Healing Camp Children
Photo by Barb Blackdeer-Mackenzie



Virtually

Guidance- Art Club (3 classes). Ranging from students in first through twelfth grade and separated into three age-appropriate groups, instructors Leslie Falcon and Josie Lee led students through various art activities that grew imagination and creativity, let students explore new materials, and took students from start to finish.

Guidance- Book Club (8 classes). Ranging from students in first through twelfth grade and separated into eight, age-appropriate groups, instructor Leslie Falcon kept students on track with books of their choice and discussed with them the concepts in each portion of their books. This activity helped prevent “summer regression”. Summer regression is a phenomena where student’s reading scores between spring and fall tend to backslide because of few academically-based activities in summer. For this summer, K -- 2 there are 35 registered; grades 3 – 5 had 35 students; grades 6 – 8 there are 45, and; in grades 9-12 there are 33 registered at this time.

Traditions 101 Instructor, George “Hushi” Greendeer, takes a few minutes each week to share with students and families stories of “olden days.” Some of the topics are more fable-based, others are from George’s experiences growing up like at Dells Indian Village, and still others are his memories regarding the community. For spring and summer terms, we had 108 students.

Traditions 101 ADA At the request of other divisions and departments, certain students were identified as having special needs and circumstances. The idea was to offer an older male mentor to help the students and families with Ho-Chunk identity, to let each child know that someone cares for them, and to have some special time with someone who lives a Ho-Chunk way (teaching a few Ho-Chunk words, telling stories, and having some fun). George serves our department in that capacity, meeting “where the students are at”, and helping them recognize and appreciate their Ho-Chunk background.

Traditions 102 For those students who participated two years and more in Traditions 101 with George Greendeer’s virtual class, he reinforced old material and developed new material for students to help them continue to grow. There were five students in spring, and five students in summer.

Language program called “Bringing Ho-Chunk Home” Virtually, the Language Division offered Good Life students and families with a virtual nesting-style, language-learning program. Two to three of the Language staff helped administer and teach this weekly program.

Financial Literacy & Money Path. The Financial Literacy curriculum is different from the trust money financial literacy curriculum, however it still offers excellent financial literacy foundations. Students could take virtual courses, however it seemed the more popular solution was to offer this at General Council. Money Path is a computer application that allows the individual to explore various life avenues and reflect on what path they would like to take by figuring out what kind of outcomes they want. Students who went through Money Path said it was enlightening as to what it would cost to maintain the lifestyle they want and was powerful in that regard.



Circle Teachings. Based on Teachings of the Medicine Wheel by Charity Thunder wanağira and Ann Johnson. The lessons include finding circles around the students' environment, listening to stories about circles, gain a better understanding of pan-tribal ways of thinking and decision-making principles, and the Children's Fire (an ancient, group decision-making method).

Accomplishments for FY 2024/2025 Goals and Strategies

- Federally, each grant report has been accepted and in compliance with steady growth in original student participants throughout the grant's run. For a time, (especially during the pandemic) this program was a "star" in the Office of Indian Education due to the virtual options offered, and continuous growth of student numbers. As people have come out of the pandemic, student numbers went down because of so many other options returning, including in-person classes, team sports, and returning to school. The program has still grown, but it has been slower.
- One stated goal was to "increase student and family awareness and engagement in career and college options by 20% as determined pre- and post—test scores." Awareness and engagement was encouraged by various college visits, and specifically accomplished at the 2024 General Council. With pre- and post-test scores, 100% of the appropriate age set reported that they had greater awareness and engagement in career and college options by going through Money Path. This was 167 of the students ages 14 - 19.

Unofficial Goals and Strategies

- Bottom line. Concerns about the library and its financial position are getting taken on jointly between the Department of Education and the Waagaax Hakiruxaraxara Hosto Library Board, which is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization based in the state of Wisconsin.
- Strategy. A similar grant has been solicited for award, however it will not be known until September or October when winners will be notified. Barring that award, integrating Good Life program-based goals of increasing financial literacy, increasing career options, and integrating cultural activities will partly be split between Higher Education, School-Community Relations, and Tutoring Services.
- Relationships between Department of Education staff, students, and school staff have improved. In BRF alone, there was a record 37 of 37 graduates this year! Good Life staff were only a small part of this effort, but we were part of it. The Department hopes to maintain and continue to improve these relationships through time. Best practice in the field of education says that since the relationships are individually built, it is best to keep the same people in those spots. As for the closing of the grant and services continuing, that's not as easily accomplished. New job descriptions have been in progress to provide similar services. Some have passed, some require some adjustment. Current staff, out of practicality, have had to look for other positions to maintain their family's livelihoods. If we lose those individuals, it will take about a year's time for students, school staff, and other colleagues to build the relationships with them.
- Acquiring tools, such as a community Glow Forge, sewing machines, leather punches, looms, irons, hammers, craft drills, art samples, and designs (such as various loom and other designs to build) have been acquired through this grant for future community- and student-use. Please direct



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any questions to the Department of Education (715) 284 – 4915 or Library at (715) 284 – 0905, extension 15230 on how to access these items.

Problems encountered and Corrective Actions Taken

Out of our Program's Control

The biggest problem encountered is getting accurate data in a timely fashion from Treasury. We continue to urge Treasury to provide these financials accurately and timely. Post-Covid recovery (in terms of staff size) and InforLawson (database and software) have been challenges for them to get fully operational with all the “bugs” worked out.

In our Control

For the General Council Financial Literacy event at the Kalahari, the computer programs ran great, however the starter money was reliant on money apps like Cash App, Venmo, and Apple Pay. As such, the connectivity was an issue for the money transfers and caused congestion and frustration, despite (or maybe because of) the popularity. Email addresses and money app addresses were verified and all appropriate transfers took place for some were on-site and for others were post-event. If we were ever to run this again, cash is a definite consideration.

There are two other grants from the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS). Both of those will be managed within and between the Department of Education and the Library once the main Good Life program is shuttered.

Goals and Strategies for the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY 2025/2026)

The consistent goal of this grant in terms of its future funding was for this to go to tribal dollars because there has been consistent feedback from tribal members that want growth in the family and age offerings. One grant has been filed thus far, however federal funding has been challenged by the current presidential agenda and has destabilized both state and tribal funding.

At the time of this writing, federal grant officers have informed us that there will be no requests honored for “no-cost extensions”. When taking the issue throughout the Ho-Chunk Nation this past year no definitive response has been given, so we must work on the assumption of shut down. It's been a great program and those of us employed by it will miss offering these services very much.

Alternative Funding Sources and Partnerships utilized or explored during FY 2024/2025

One additional OIE grant was filed, however the answers will come at the beginning of October once the program is shuttered.