



BIG SMILES

BRIGHT FUTURES



2024-2025

Head Start Annual Report





This year was marked by significant advocacy events that elevated the importance of early childhood education in our community. In July, we welcomed Director Khari M. Garvin from the Office of Head Start, along with staff from the Region 5 office in Chicago, for a tour of the Porter County Early Learning Academy and the St. Mark Early Learning Academy. These visits provided a valuable opportunity for families and staff to share firsthand stories about how Head Start and Early Head Start have transformed lives and strengthened our community.

Despite changes in the federal landscape, with a new administration proposing reductions to programs like Head Start, our commitment has not wavered. In February, US Representative Frank J. Mrvan and Gary Mayor Eddie D. Melton joined us at St. Mark Early Learning Academy, engaging with children, families, and staff. Their visit culminated in a press conference that underscored the continued need for Head Start and early childhood services in our region.

Through these events, we have collectively advocated for the importance of investing in early learning. It is crucial to remember that 90% of a child's brain develops within the first five years of life. The experiences and support provided during these formative years lay the foundation for lifelong success, not just for the child, but for their family and generations to come.

Thank you for your passion, your voice, and your partnership. Let us continue to work together to ensure every child and family receives the opportunities they deserve!

Dr. Karen Carradine

Vice President

The 2024-2025 program year marked a milestone as Head Start celebrated its 60th birthday—a testament to the millions of lives touched and transformed through one united program. Our program year’s theme, “One Team. Same Goals.” reminds us of the incredible power of unity and connection in the work we do every day. When we pause, take a breath, and reconnect with our “why,” we see that it is connection—and our united force—that allows us to move forward.



As we reflect on the past year, we are reminded that Head Start’s strength is in its unity. Across the nation, programs stood together, sharing our impact, telling our story, and advocating for the future of Head Start. Actress and long-time Head Start supporter Jennifer Garner captured this spirit beautifully when she described Head Start employees as “brain architects.” Here at Geminus, we are proud to be both a high-quality program and a team of brain architects, building bright futures for children and families.

The year also highlighted the importance of advocacy. We discovered new and creative ways to share our story with those who may not fully understand Head Start’s impact. Through our “Ask Me About Head Start” buttons, our mission found its way into schools, neighborhoods, and community events across Lake and Porter Counties, sparking conversations, building awareness, and empowering a new wave of ambassadors.

As we continue moving forward together, let us remain connected, lift our voices in unity, and never lose sight of the impact we make every day.

With gratitude and pride,

Brandy Jania

Deputy Director



Geminus Head Start serves children and families across Lake and Porter Counties in Northwest Indiana. Together, these counties are home to more than 760,000 residents and over 46,000 young children under age six. Lake County is Indiana's second most populous county, and Porter ranks ninth, making this one of the state's largest and most dynamic regions.

Geminus' service area encompasses a rich mix of communities, including urban centers such as Gary and Hammond, post-industrial cities like East Chicago, rapidly growing suburbs such as Merrillville, Crown Point, Hobart, and Valparaiso, as well as rural townships throughout Porter County. The region reflects wide variation in household income, population density, and racial and linguistic diversity. Lake County is among the most racially and linguistically diverse counties in Indiana, while Porter County continues to see changes in family backgrounds and home languages. These characteristics shape the design and delivery of Geminus services, ensuring they remain culturally and linguistically responsive.

Our Service Area



These vibrant communities also face real challenges. Over 9,800 young children in Lake and Porter Counties live in households below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and some families contend with barriers such as limited transportation and food access.

Geminus' role is to help ensure every child and family has the opportunity to thrive.



GEMINUS

Regional Care Group Member



Mission

Geminus Head Start is the Northwest Indiana leader in early childhood education impacting the lives of young children and their families. We anchor ourselves in the community, providing health, education, and family services through collaboration, comprehensive services, resources, and support, resulting in greater opportunities for personal growth and community connection.

Vision

Geminus Head Start will continue to be an organization that inspires, empowers and ignites children, families, and the community to reach their full potential.

STRATEGIC GOALS & Objectives



Geminus Head Start is focused on the following over the next five years.

GOAL 1

Strive for Organizational Success

- Review and revise internal communication and feedback processes
- Strengthen Continuous Quality Improvement Model (CQI) to make data-informed decisions
- Partner with Regional Care Group communications department to develop a marketing and communications plan for Geminus Head Start
- Explore additional funding opportunities to innovate and expand program services
- Maintain National Head Start Association (NHSA) Program of Excellence Accreditation

GOAL 2

Provide High-Quality Program Services

- Prioritize a culture of safety
- Deliver intentional services based on trends in child, family, health, and monitoring outcomes

GOAL 3

Secure, Sustain, and Support a Strong Workforce

- Continue High Performing Organizations efforts to create a positive work culture
- Increase recruitment efforts for qualified staff
- Enhance the professional development program structure

GOAL 4

Enhance Strategic Partnerships

- Increase community presence and networking
- Create a structure for identifying and fostering strategic partnerships
- Increase engagement in industry affiliations

Program

HIGHLIGHTS

Education & Disabilities

DISABILITIES SERVICES

Geminus Head Start successfully met the 10% disabilities requirement across all programs, including recipient, delegate, and child-care partnership sites. This accomplishment reflects our continued commitment to inclusion and early identification of children with special needs. Collaboration with families, community partners, and local education agencies helped ensure that all children received individualized supports and services designed to promote their success.

CHILD OUTCOMES

The Head Start program demonstrated measurable growth in child development outcomes during the program year. Assessment data indicated an average 20% increase across all developmental domains (social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, and literacy) from fall to spring. Especially noteworthy were Head Start gains of 35% in cognition and math and 32% in language and literacy. These results highlight the effectiveness of our curriculum implementation, individualized teaching strategies, and data-driven approach to planning for children's learning.

CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE INITIATIVE

During the program year, Geminus participated in the Conscious Discipline Endorsed Facilitator (CDEF) Pilot Program, a national initiative aimed at building leadership capacity in social-emotional learning and responsive classroom management. Ten members of our management team completed the requirements to become Conscious Discipline Facilitators, enabling them to train and coach staff directly within our program.

The CDEF team dedicated the year to developing implementation procedures, designing a comprehensive training framework, and aligning Conscious Discipline practices with our existing professional development systems. These efforts will culminate in the launch of our new initiative, *Consciously Adjusting My Perception (C.A.M.P.)*, during the 2025–2026 program year. Through C.A.M.P., Geminus will continue to strengthen trauma-informed practices, promote emotional regulation, and support positive relationships between staff and children.

ERSEA

This year, the Enrollment, Recruitment, Selection, Eligibility, and Attendance (ERSEA) team embraced technology to provide families with greater flexibility through the application and enrollment process. Families can now apply with an ERSEA Specialist not only in-person, but also over the phone. Staff are utilizing online texting to communicate with families quickly and effectively, which has been especially helpful for families with busy schedules.

In April, we adopted an electronic system for sending and receiving application documents. This system is available to all families applying for the program and has significantly reduced the number of office visits and email exchanges required to complete paperwork. As a result, applications are now processed more efficiently, easing the burden on families and staff alike.

In March, we spent two days working with our Porter County ELA team and Motion Source Video Production to create and film a new marketing commercial. It released in the fall and follows a pregnant mom touring the center while learning about the services and programs available to her growing family. We're proud to share that the video features familiar faces; our own staff and families as "actors." Once released, we encourage everyone to share it proudly with their networks and communities.

We look forward to continuing to innovate and improve the enrollment experience for our families.

Family Services

For the first time since 2019, Geminus Head Start has reintroduced events specifically designed for father figures and other positive male role models. In the 2024–2025 program year, these gatherings helped to rebuild important connections that support both family engagement and early learning.

At our recent *Level Up Ultimate Game Night*, Head Start children were joined by the men who play meaningful roles in their lives: fathers, grandfathers, uncles, older siblings, and trusted family friends. Together, they enjoyed board games, tackled an obstacle course, and shared a meal while making lasting memories.

When male role models are actively involved in a child's early education, it sends a powerful message of support, stability, and encouragement. These relationships help children build confidence, strengthen social-emotional skills, and develop a positive attitude toward learning, all key ingredients for school readiness. Geminus Head Start is proud to create spaces where father figures can connect, participate, and make a lasting impact on their children's development.



Health Services

Health is the foundation of school readiness. As a cornerstone of Head Start, our health services ensure children receive the screenings, preventive care, and education they need to be healthy and ready to learn. Throughout the 2024–2025 program year, our Health Team supported families through ongoing services, health education, and community partnerships.

Promoting and educating children and families on oral health, such as daily brushing and regular dental visits, can be a challenge. To support these efforts, we introduced the “Brush” Oral Health Curriculum this year, giving staff new tools to help children and families build stronger oral health habits.

We also deepened our partnerships with community providers to bring essential health resources directly to families. These collaborations were showcased at the Health and Enrollment Fair in June 2025, which offered families a one-stop opportunity to complete nearly every required health service for Head Start enrollment. Regional Health Systems provided physicals and staff TB testing; the Lake and Porter County Health Departments delivered immunizations and shared health resources; the Gary Health Department conducted lead testing; the Lions Club ensured children had access to vision screenings; and The Heart That Smiles continued its commitment to oral care services and dental referrals. Together, these efforts removed barriers, streamlined access, and helped ensure that children began the year healthy, supported, and ready to learn.

Professional Development

In 2024, Geminus further strengthened its professional development efforts by enhancing the onboarding process to create a smoother and more supportive experience for new staff. Live tracking documents now allow supervisors to easily monitor training progress and provide timely guidance as staff complete requirements. We also implemented more robust job shadowing opportunities, giving new employees hands-on preparation and a clearer understanding of their roles from the very beginning.

To build on individualized growth, we used feedback collected throughout the year in our learning management system to thoughtfully plan and design professional development topics that respond directly to staff needs. This approach ensures that training remains relevant, practical, and beneficial for long-term success.

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance (QA) Team plays a vital role in building a strong foundation of program quality and compliance, ensuring that children and families experience safe, nurturing, and high-quality environments that support lifelong success. This year, QA prioritized environmental health and safety monitoring, active supervision, and secure child dismissal, while strengthening monitoring systems and accountability across all service areas. A Quality Assurance Manager was added for dedicated oversight of five Program Monitors, strengthening coordination, accountability, and consistency.

A key focus this year was the expanded use of DataSay, an online software platform that supports consistent monitoring and documentation by capturing, tracking, and analyzing findings, time-bound corrective action plans, specific action items, and assignments. The Geminus Facilities Department has fully integrated DataSay into its inspection process, improving how facility findings are documented and resolved. This system functionality extends program-wide, giving all service areas a stronger digital framework for accountability and continuous improvement.

Geminus Head Start also deepened its collaboration with other Geminus/Regional Care Group administrative services departments. Human Resources, Finance, Communications, and Information Services actively participated in this year's Self-Assessment, contributing valuable insights and perspectives. The process culminated in the 2024–2025 Self-Assessment Collaborative Session, which brought more than 100 staff, parents, Policy Council members, Board members, and community partners together in person at Geminus, making it one of the largest and most inclusive Self-Assessment efforts in program history. Together, participants reflected on program strengths, examined challenges, and helped set priorities for the coming year.



EXPANSION IN PORTER COUNTY

Geminus welcomed Stepping Stones Early Learning Center in Portage as a new Child Care Partner, expanding Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership services into Porter County.



Community
ADVOCACY & VISIBILITY

In February 2025, U.S.

Representative Frank Mrvan
and Gary Mayor Eddie Melton

visited the St. Mark Early
Learning Academy in

Gary. Their visit, covered
by ABC 7 Chicago

and multiple regional
outlets, highlighted the

importance of protecting
Head Start funding at the

federal level. In May 2025, Lee Ann
Angerman, Regional Director for

U.S. Senator Jim Banks, toured the

Porter County Early Learning Academy, as Geminus
continued strengthening engagement with policymakers.

INNOVATIVE EMPLOYER COLLABORATION

Geminus launched its first Employer-Sponsored Child Care room in April 2025, demonstrating commitment to supporting its working families through flexible and responsive early learning solutions.



NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION'S

Program of Excellence

In September 2025, Geminus was awarded the National

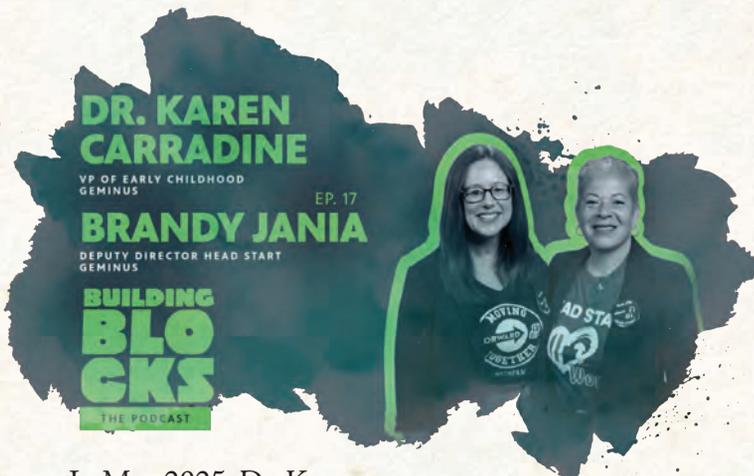
Head Start Association's *Program of Excellence* designation, a prestigious recognition awarded to only a select number of programs nationwide.

This application reflects Geminus' dedication to the highest standards of quality in early childhood education and comprehensive family services.

Public ENGAGEMENT & MEDIA OUTREACH

Leadership and staff
shared Geminus' story

on multiple public platforms. In May 2025, Dr. Karen Carradine and Brandy Jania joined Lakeshore Public Media's Building Blocks podcast with Dr. Mary Jane Eisenhauer, where they reflected on Head Start's generational impact and highlighted its comprehensive services for children and families. In June 2025, Geminus was further spotlighted on Lakeshore Public Media's Friends & Neighbors program, featuring teachers Carolina De La Paz and Isabel DeLaCruz. Both educators described how their own preschool and Head Start experiences inspired them to enter the early childhood education field, with Carolina bringing the unique perspective of having been both a Head Start student and parent herself.



PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FAMILIES

In May 2025, the Porter County Department of Child Services invited Deputy Director Brandy Jania to present on Head Start's role in reaching the most vulnerable populations, strengthening connections with child welfare stakeholders.



2024 to 2025

PROGRAM Status



<i>Category</i>	Funded Enrollment Number	Average Monthly Enrollment %	Average Monthly Attendance %	Total No. of Children Served	Total No. of Families Served	Percentage of Eligible Children Served
Head Start	1,016	99.7%	84%	1,188	1,082	87%
Early Head Start	148	100%	86%	251 ^{**}	212	90% ^{**}
EHS-Child Care Partnership	200	99%	84%	284	247	84%

*Primary reasons for absences included illness, family reasons, and transportation issues.

**Early Head Start is funded to serve 118 infants and toddlers and 30 pregnant women. 176 children and 75 pregnant women were served during the program year.

<i>Category</i>	Received Physical Exam	Received Dental Exam	Have Medical Home	Have Dental Home	Have Health Insurance
Head Start	91%	77%	100%	98%	98%
Early Head Start	93%	70%	99%	77%	96%
EHS-Child Care Partnership	90%	70%	99.6%	79%	94%

Family & Community Engagement

	Head Start	Early Head Start	EHS-Child Care Partnership
Families Participating in Family Engagement Services [*]	802	138	159
Fathers Participating in Family Engagement Services	876	234	94
Families Who Received Family Service Referrals ^{**}	98%	96%	100%

*Monthly average of families who participated in family engagement activities

**Referral services include (but are not limited to) emergency crisis interventions, adult education, etc.

SCHOOL READINESS Goals

Geminus School Readiness Goals align with My Teaching Strategies Learning Objectives, Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, Indiana Foundations Standards, and the Indiana Core Knowledge Competencies.

GOALS

APPROACHES TO LEARNING

Children will demonstrate initiative, curiosity, and creativity during most classroom experiences

COGNITION & MATHEMATICS DEVELOPMENT

Children will remember and connect experiences

Children will use and understand number concepts and operations

Children will explore and demonstrate spatial relationships and shapes

DUAL LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Children will demonstrate acquisition of the English language through communicative interactions

LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Children will understand and respond to increasingly complex oral questions and directions

Children will hear and manipulate the sounds in oral language recognizing similarities and differences

LANGUAGE & LITERACY

Children will recognize letter names and sounds (Head Start only)

Understands how to open a book and turn pages

Retells familiar stories

Children will write for a variety of purposes using increasingly sophisticated symbols

PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Children will demonstrate gross and fine motor skills

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Children will demonstrate initiative, curiosity, and creativity during most classroom experiences

Engages in play experience with peers and plays with respect to self and/or peer's personal space

Respects self, others and property and plays with respect to self and/or peer's personal space

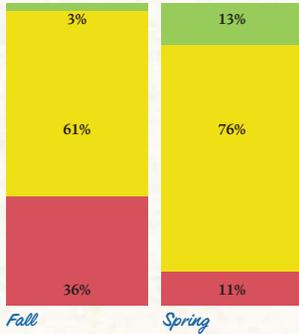
Instructional Staff complete three checkpoints per program year on each child to individualize lesson plans and monitor each child's progress toward the School Readiness Goals.



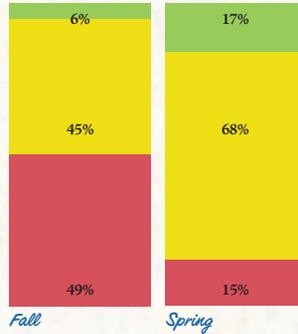
Head Start

School Readiness Outcomes

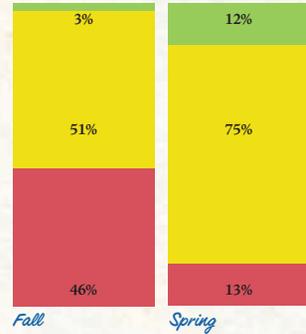
APPROACHES TO LEARNINGS 25% GROWTH*



COGNITION & MATHEMATICS 35% GROWTH*



LANGUAGE & LITERACY 32% GROWTH*



PERPETUAL, MOTOR, & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT 20% GROWTH*



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT 26% GROWTH*



88%
of children
met or exceeded
expectations

LEGEND

- Exceeds
- Met
- Below

*Percentage growth in meeting/exceeding expectations from fall vs. spring

Students by age group

AGE GROUP	FALL	SPRING
3 class/grade	476	494
4 class/grade	485	489
TOTAL	961	983

Students by other categories

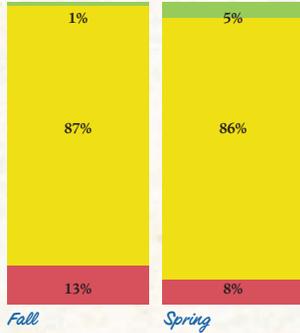
	FALL	SPRING
Returning	418	397
Has IEP/IFSP	115	111
Dual language	92	94

Early Head Start

School Readiness Outcomes

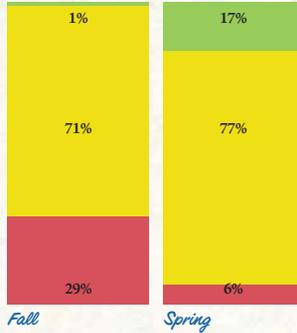
APPROACHES TO LEARNINGS

4% GROWTH*



COGNITION & MATHEMATICS

22% GROWTH*



LANGUAGE & LITERACY

13% GROWTH*



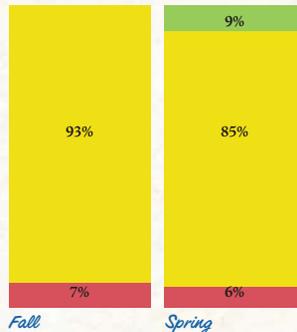
PERPETUAL, MOTOR, & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

5% GROWTH*



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1% GROWTH*



90%
of children
met or exceeded
expectations

LEGEND

- Exceeds
- Met
- Below

*Percentage growth in meeting/exceeding expectations, fall vs. spring

Students by age group

AGE GROUP	FALL	SPRING
Birth to 1 year	14	8
1 to 2 years	36	31
2 to 3 years	62	72
TOTAL	112	111

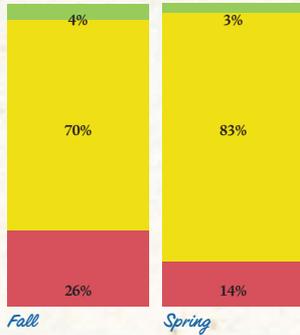
Students by other categories

	FALL	SPRING
Returning	62	42
Has IEP/IFSP	16	14
Dual language	12	14

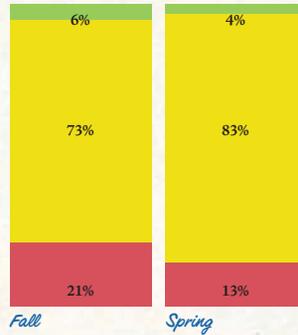
Early Head Start CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIPS

School Readiness Outcomes

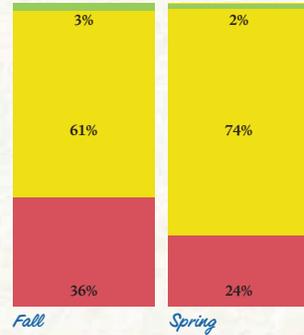
APPROACHES TO LEARNINGS 12% GROWTH*



COGNITION & MATHEMATICS 9% GROWTH*



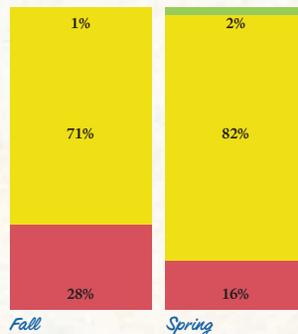
LANGUAGE & LITERACY 11% GROWTH*



PERPETUAL, MOTOR, & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT 18% GROWTH*



SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT 12% GROWTH*



84%
of children
met or exceeded
expectations

LEGEND

- Exceeds
- Met
- Below

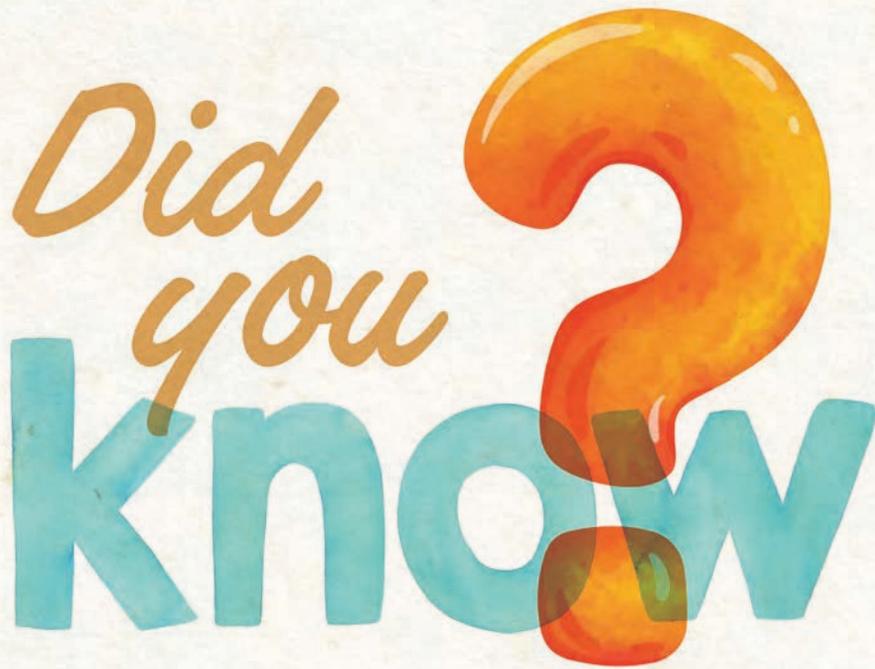
*Percentage growth in meeting/exceeding expectations, fall vs. spring

Students by age group

AGE GROUP	FALL	SPRING
Birth to 1 year	20	11
1 to 2 years	62	51
2 to 3 years	91	119
3 class/grade	1	3
TOTAL	174	184

Students by other categories

	FALL	SPRING
Returning	130	113
Has IEP/IFSP	18	15
Dual language	1	1



Geminus Head Start is the largest Head Start program in the state of Indiana.

In 2024-2025, we served 1,723 children and pregnant women and 1,535 families across center-based, home-based, child care center, and family child care home settings.

Executive Summary of **SELF-ASSESSMENT & IMPROVEMENT Plans**



The Head Start Program Performance Standards require two systems of self-reflection: ongoing monitoring and Self-Assessment. Ongoing monitoring takes place throughout the year and helps answer the question, “Are we doing things right?”

Self-Assessment, on the other hand, is a dedicated time for programs to pause, reflect, and ask the bigger question, “Are we doing the right things?”

Throughout the year, program leaders and staff monitor operations through the ongoing monitoring system. The annual Self-Assessment builds on this work by using program data to assess progress towards strategic goals.

Self ASSESSMENT

Geminus Head Start's Self-Assessment is a two-phase process, starting with internal content-area reviews and concluding with a Collaborative Session that includes staff, parents, leadership, Policy Council and Board members, and community partners. The process highlights successes, identifies areas for improvement, and examines program-wide data to address systemic issues and guide planning. The 2024-2025 Collaborative Session involved over 100 participants across five focus areas—Education, ERSEA, Family Services and Mental Health, Health and Nutrition, and Organizational Success—who reviewed data and feedback to develop program-wide improvement plans for 2025–2026, providing a clear overview of accomplishments, challenges, and steps to strengthen services.

Education STRENGTHS

Curriculum is Aligned to School Readiness Goals

Creative Curriculum is utilized for Geminus Head Start center-based programs.

Individualized Support and Inclusion

The education team prioritizes inclusive practices by providing tailored supports for children with disabilities and those with suspected delays. Individualization ensures that each child receives appropriate resources to thrive.

Family Engagement in Learning

Families are engaged as partners in education through conferences, home visits, and goal-setting meetings. Efforts are made to communicate school readiness goals and involve parents in supporting learning at home.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ♦ Increase parent understanding of school readiness goals.
- ♦ Provide training on disabilities, focusing on a deeper understanding of the disability.
- ♦ Establish a working transition plan between Head Start and the Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

ERSEA

STRENGTHS

Complete Full Enrollment Initiative (FEI)

The ERSEA team increased enrollment over the past program year and reached the required 97% enrollment.

Centralized enrollment team located in the Geminus Corporate building

This change has helped to streamline the enrollment and application process.

Application appointments can now be conducted over the phone or via a video call

This has removed the transportation barrier for families.

Adoption of DocuSign to obtain parent signatures on forms and application documentation collection

DocuSign has helped speed up the application process for families and staff.

Improved communication

Weekly meetings are conducted virtually with Child Care Partners (CCPs) to ensure enrollment is current.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ♦ Evaluate the application process to increase efficiency and flexibility for families, timely processing of applications, and effective follow-up to families and site staff.
- ♦ Implement the new Head Start Performance Standard to include an adjustment to a family's annual gross income when the family pays annual housing costs over 30% of their income.

Family Services & Mental Health

STRENGTHS

Behavioral Support

The Family Services team offered behavioral support to the Geminus and Child Care Partnership Head Start classrooms by facilitating the AI's Pals social-emotional curriculum.

Resources and Referrals

The Family Advocates utilized the Family Outcome Assessment, motivational interviewing, and relationship building with the families they serve to offer individual resources and referrals. The Family Advocates also front load families with resources to strengthen and build relationships.

Family Engagement

Family engagement efforts have increased at the Head Start sites, resulting in higher virtual adult education views and slightly higher in-person engagement attendance.

Behavioral Health

The Behavioral Health Services consultants have provided ongoing support for individual family referrals and consistent monthly classroom management support.

Family Advocate Supports

Family Services Managers have strengthened the support they give Family Advocates using a real-time family services dashboard and other data reports generated on an ongoing basis.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Family Services would like to formulate a structure to strengthen in-person family engagement opportunities and attendance.
- Family Services aims to strengthen and expand mental health supports by enhancing current services, increasing access to resources, and deepening partnerships with mental health providers to better serve both families and staff.

Health & Nutrition

STRENGTHS

The Health team utilized a mobile dentist to provide care onsite

Mobile dentists' units help bring needed dental care to children enrolled in Geminus Head Start and Early Head Start.

Families received oral health literature before the arrival of the mobile dentist

Geminus Head Start provides a variety of resources to families, including dental flyers and referrals.

Health Specialists visited the sites to perform specific health assessments and screenings

Being able to visit Head Start and Child Care Partnership sites while serving children directly has been a vital part of the Health team, ensuring that children receive health assessments and screenings promptly.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ♦ Increase the number of oral exams across the program.
- ♦ Ensure that all children receive fresh fruit daily and monitor for substitutes accurately.
- ♦ Ensure that children with allergies can start school in a timely manner by receiving proper documentation from their doctor.



Organizational Success

STRENGTHS

Effective Communication Systems

Communication among Head Start content areas and with Geminus/Regional Care Group administrative services departments has strengthened over the past year through regular cross-department meetings, touchpoints, and updates. These ongoing connections have led to clearer alignment, faster problem-solving, and stronger operational consistency. In addition, communication channels for staff and families were expanded through QR code surveys available throughout the year, allowing both groups to share input, questions, and concerns in real time.

Collaborative Decision-Making

Geminus Head Start continues to encourage meaningful participation from staff, families, and community partners in shaping program priorities. Focus groups, surveys, and other feedback opportunities have provided participants with avenues to share their experiences and perspectives. These collective insights have informed planning and improvement efforts, fostering shared ownership and trust across all levels of the organization.

Leadership Visibility and Support

The Head Start Leadership Team made a concerted effort this year to maintain a consistent presence at recipient, delegate, and child care partnership sites. Regular visits have strengthened connections between field staff and senior leadership, providing opportunities for direct communication, responsive support, and timely problem-solving. This increased visibility has helped bridge gaps between program operations and leadership decision-making, reinforcing a culture of accessibility and collaboration.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ✦ Continue to strengthen internal and external communication across all program levels.
- ✦ Increase family engagement participation through targeted outreach and ongoing support.
- ✦ Enhance monitoring and reporting systems to further support data-informed decision-making.

Professional Development

STRENGTHS

Development and implementation of role-specific onboarding workflows

The Professional Development team successfully designed and piloted position-specific onboarding timelines that include sequenced training, job shadowing, and system access. These workflows have improved clarity, consistency, and relevance for new hires.

Improved feedback tools and data driven decision making

Post-training evaluation questions were revised to improve the quality, reliability, and usefulness of feedback. This allowed the team to gather more meaningful data to guide training decisions, monitor impact, and identify follow-up needs.

Successful collaboration to meet NAEYC accreditation standards

In partnership with content area directors, the Professional Development team revised policies and procedures to align with National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards—particularly Standard 6D. These efforts directly contributed to the Head Start site at Ridge View earning NAEYC accreditation,

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- ✦ Creation and implementation of a process for individualized professional development.

Community Needs ASSESSMENT



Each year, Geminus Head Start reviews community data to better understand the needs of young children and families in Lake and Porter Counties. This helps us shape our services and ensure we are addressing the most pressing challenges families face.

Key findings from the 2024-2025 Community Needs Assessment include the following:

Across Lake and Porter Counties, thousands of young children face barriers to success—from poverty and limited child care options to health challenges and language barriers. At the same time, families share their hopes for more resources, more learning opportunities, and stronger supports for both children and parents. Geminus Head Start is committed to listening and responding, ensuring that every child is healthy, supported, and ready for school.

FAMILIES AND INCOME

- ♦ Together, Lake and Porter Counties are home to more than 46,000 children under age 6.
- ♦ Many families are raising children with limited financial resources:
 - ♦ In Lake County, about 8,300 young children live below the federal poverty line.
 - ♦ In Porter County, about 1,400 young children live below the federal poverty line.
- ♦ Families led by single mothers face the greatest financial challenges. Across both counties, the median income for female-headed households with children is about \$33,734, compared to \$118,405 for married-couple families.

CHILD CARE GAPS

- ✦ About 65% of young children in Lake and Porter Counties are in need of child care.
- ✦ Licensed early care and education programs cannot fully meet this need:
 - ✦ In Lake County, licensed programs can serve about 66% of children who need care.
 - ✦ In Porter County, capacity is lower, meeting only about 51% of need.
- ✦ Child Care Vouchers (CCDF):
 - ✦ Recent funding cuts by the state of Indiana have resulted in a current voucher waitlist of over 30,000 children.
 - ✦ From December 2024 to September 2025, the number of vouchers available each month has been reduced by over 17,000.
 - ✦ Reimbursement rates to child care providers have also been impacted by funding cuts: 10% reduction for infant/toddlers and 15% for ages 3 to 5.
- ✦ Quality also matters:
 - ✦ In Lake County, about 61% of available slots are in high-quality programs (Level 3 or 4 on Indiana's Paths to QUALITY™).
 - ✦ In Porter County, about 68% of available slots are in high-quality programs

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- ✦ Families continue to face health challenges that affect children's success:
 - ✦ In Lake County, about 23% of children experience food insecurity.
 - ✦ In Porter County, about 25% of children experience food insecurity.
- ✦ Both counties have fewer doctors and dentists per person than the national average, making it harder for families to access needed care.
- ✦ Prenatal care is also a concern:
 - ✦ In Lake County, about 30% of mothers do not receive care during the first trimester of pregnancy.
 - ✦ In Porter County, about 25% of mothers do not receive care during the first trimester.

LANGUAGE & CULTURE

- ✦ Lake County is especially diverse with around 11% of residents speaking Spanish at home, compared with lower rates in Porter County and the state overall.
- ✦ Spanish-speaking parents identified English language instruction as one of their top resource needs, highlighting the importance of bilingual and culturally responsive services.

FAMILY VOICES

- ✦ Families enrolled in Geminus programs expressed very high satisfaction, praising staff support and their children's learning experiences.
- ✦ At the same time, families identified unmet needs, including:
 - ✦ Help with utilities, housing, and child care
 - ✦ Job training and employment opportunities
 - ✦ Parenting classes, stress management support, and safety workshops

Thousands of young children face barriers to success. Geminus Head Start is committed to listening and responding, ensuring that every child is healthy, supported, and ready for school.



COMMUNITY Needs

↓ DECREASED*

↑ INCREASED*

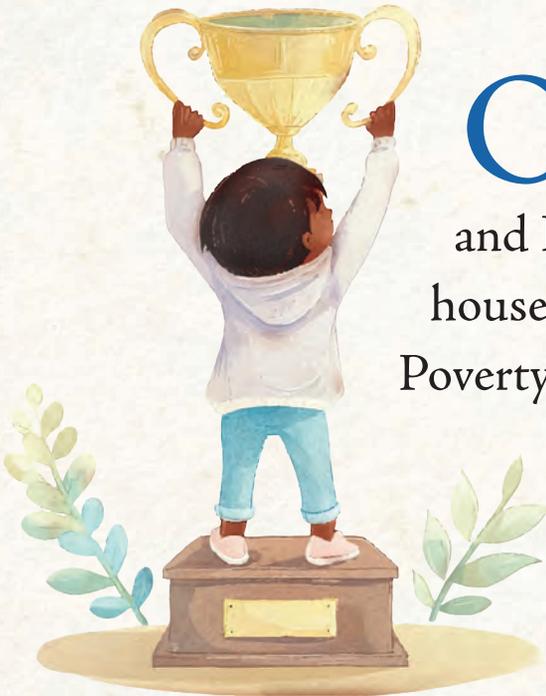
→ REMAINED THE SAME*

	HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START CCP
Population for Children Under 6	↓ 497,795 (2018: 506,496)	↑ 35,069 (2018: 35,030)	↓ 10,787 (2018: 11,076)
Percentage of Children Under 6 in Poverty	↓ 17% (2018: 22%)	↓ 24% (2018: 27%)	↓ 13% (2018: 14%)
Number of Children Receiving TANF Grants	↓ 9,626 (2018: 11,202)	↑ 1,272 (2018: 1,255)	↓ 62 (2018: 118)
Households Receiving SNAP Benefits	↑ 275,966 (2018: 270,609)	↓ 28,006 (2018: 29,361)	↑ 4,291 (2018: 4,384)
Number of Children Under 18 Receiving SSI Benefits	↓ 19,502 (2018: 21,876)	↓ 2,037 (2018: 2,242)	↓ 287 (2018: 344)
Children Experiencing Homelessness	↓ 839 (2018: 962)	↓ 32 (2018: 54)	↑ 59 (2018: 31)
Students Experiencing Homelessness (McKinney-Vento Act)	↓ 16,427 (2018: 18,811)	↓ 823 (2018: 850)	↓ 316 (2018: 422)
Total CHINS (Children in Need of Services)	↓ 13,727 (2018: 21,588)	↓ 659 (2018: 1,523)	↓ 141 (2018: 178)
Youth Under 18 with a Known Disability Status	→ 5% (2018: 5%)	→ 4% (2018: 4%)	↑ 4% (2018: 3%)
Children Served through First Steps	↓ 23,574 (2021) (2018: 26,072)	↓ 1,756 (2021) (2018: 1,823)	↑ 615 (2021) (2018: 585)
Children Experiencing Food Insecurity	↑ 19% (2018: 18%)	↑ 23% (2018: 20%)	→ 14% (2018: 14%)
% No Early Prenatal Care (1st Trimester)	↓ 27% (2018: 32%)	↓ 30% (2018: 35%)	↓ 25% (2018: 28%)
Infant Mortality Rate	↓ 6.7 (2018: 6.8)	↑ 7.3 (2018: 7.1)	↓ 3 (2018: 4.7)

EARLY CARE & Education Access

↓ DECREASED ↑ INCREASED → REMAINED THE SAME

	INDIANA	LAKE COUNTY	PORTER COUNTY
Children Under 6 Who Need Care Because All Parents Work	↑ 68% (320,946) (2018: 64%)	↑ 65% (21,676) (2018: 64%)	↑ 64% (6,672) (2018: 63%)
Capacity Available to Children Who Need Care	↑ 62% (2018: 40%)	↑ 66% (2018: 36%)	↑ 51% (2018: 22%)
Number of High-Quality Programs	↑ 1,947 (2018: 1,198)	↑ 202 (2018: 109)	↑ 33 (2018: 19)
Total High-Quality Capacity	↑ 107,007 (2018: 50,613)	↑ 8,716 (2018: 3,823)	↑ 2,329 (2018: 792)
Children with On My Way Pre-K Vouchers	↑ 5,094 (2019-20: 3,517)	↑ 366 (2019-20: 297)	↑ 77 (2019-20: 20)



Over 9,800 young children in Lake and Porter Counties live in households below the Federal Poverty Level. Geminus' role is to help ensure every child and family has the opportunity to thrive.

GEMINUS

Meeting the Needs

↓ DECREASED* ↑ INCREASED* → REMAINED THE SAME*

	HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START	EARLY HEAD START CCP
Funded Enrollment	→ 1,106 (2023-24: 1,106)	→ 118 children, 30 preg. women (2023-24: 118 children, 30 preg. women)	→ 200 (2023-24: 200)
Cumulative Enrollment	↑ 1,188 (2023-24: 1,186)	↑ 176 children, 75 preg. women (2023-24: 169 children, 63 preg. women)	↓ 284 (2023-24: 317)
Children and Pregnant Women from Income Eligible Families	↓ 267 (22%) (2023-24: 291, 25%)	↑ 57 (23%) (2023-24: 48, 28%)	↓ 63 (22%) (2023-24: 78, 25%)
Children and Pregnant Women from Families Experiencing Homelessness	↓ 36 (3%) (2023-24: 46, 4%)	↑ 12 (5%) (2023-24: 9, 5%)	↓ 11 (4%) (2023-24: 24, 8%)
Children and Pregnant Women from Families Receiving Public Assistance	↑ 704 (59%) (2023-24: 658, 55%)	↑ 154 (61%) (2023-24: 144, 85%)	↓ 155 (55%) (2023-24: 161, 51%)
Children in Foster Care	↓ 30 (3%) (2023-24: 38, 3%)	↑ 4 (2%) (2023-24: 2, 1%)	↑ 10 (4%) (2023-24: 7, 2%)
Total Families Served	↓ 1,082 (2023-24: 1,096)	↑ 212 (2023-24: 197)	↓ 247 (2023-24: 274)
% of Families That Received at Least One Service	↑ 98% (2023-24: 97%)	↓ 96% (2023-24: 98%)	↑ 100% (2023-24: 96%)

UNMET NEEDS

for Head Start Eligible Children

	SUPPLY Geminus Head Start enrollment + Child Care Development Fund enrollment	DEMAND Young children living in poverty	ESTIMATED UNMET NEED Slots needed for children in need
Ages 0-2	2,053	4,681	2,628
Ages 3-5	4,071	5,141	1,070
Service Area Total Under 6	6,124	9,822	3,698



Operating BUDGET

& Expenditures

REVENUES

	<i>Head Start</i> 2024-2025 Operating Budget	Actual Expenditures
Head Start Grant Revenue: Operations	\$15,592,024	\$13,931,715
Head Start Grant Revenue: Training	\$156,936	\$156,936
Head Start Grant Revenue: QI	\$-	\$344,153
Head Start Grant Revenue: COLA	\$375,230	\$856,503
TOTAL REVENUE	\$16,124,190	\$15,289,307

EXPENSES

Head Start Grant Revenue: Operations	\$(532,166)	\$(1,357,592)
Head Start Grant Revenue: Training	\$156,936	\$156,936
Head Start Grant Revenue: QI	\$-	\$344,153
Head Start Grant Revenue: COLA	\$375,230	\$856,503
TOTAL REVENUE	\$-	\$-
Total Supplies	\$179,000	\$373,685
Total Contractual	\$5,476,549	\$4,896,263
Total Construction		\$-
Total Other	\$868,903	\$1,464,164
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$6,899,682	\$7,934,768
UNOBLIGATED FEDERAL FUNDS	\$-	\$-
DIFFERENCE: REVENUE - EXPENSES	\$-	\$-



Early Head Start

2024-2025 Operating Budget	Actual Expenditures
\$2,594,445	\$1,792,595
\$41,120	\$41,120
\$-	\$62,406
\$62,437	\$109,581
\$2,698,002	\$2,005,702

EHS-Child Care Partnership Program

2024-2025 Operating Budget	Actual Expenditures
\$4,324,971	\$4,183,366
\$88,707	\$88,707
\$-	\$-
\$104,083	\$104,083
\$4,517,761	\$4,376,156

\$(103,557)

\$1,792,595

\$(192,790)

\$(192,790)

\$41,120

\$41,120

\$88,707

\$88,707

\$-

\$62,406

\$-

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\$62,437

\$109,581

\$104,083

\$104,083

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\$2,005,702

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\$42,200

\$36,039

\$126,050

\$30,711

\$317,338

\$(3,719)

\$2,668,920

\$2,902,162

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\$212,020

\$163,463

\$454,677

\$296,066

\$633,995

\$2,373,472

\$3,353,730

\$3,333,022

\$-

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\$(367,770)

\$-

\$-



The maximum allowable expenditure for administrative costs is 15% of the total budget. Head Start and Early Head Start was 14.98%, and the Partnership Program was 5%. A minimum of 20% of the total budget must be non-federal share: Geminus was awarded a waiver for this obligation of 20% for HS and EHS programs. The overall cost per child in Head Start was \$12,573; in Early Head Start the cost per child was \$13,552; and the Partnership cost per child is \$21,881.

*This report reflects financial data for the 2024-2025 Head Start/Early Head Start and Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grant year.

Financial Audit

A general audit of Geminus Corporation is performed each year. The 2024 fiscal year audit was conducted by Blue & Company with no deficiencies or findings. A full copy of the audit is available upon request.

Most Recent Federal Review

From March 14, 2022 to March 18, 2022, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducted a Focus Area Two (FA2) monitoring review of the Geminus Head Start and Early Head Start programs. There were 0 areas of concern, 1 area of non-compliance, and 0 deficiencies identified in the report. From October 24, 2022, to October 28, 2022, ACF conducted an FA2 monitoring follow-up review. The previous area of non-compliance was corrected, and the issue was closed out.

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Speaking loudly FOR THE SMALLEST VOICES

Geminus Head Start serves Northwest Indiana's children and families with comprehensive early childhood programs designed to nurture the whole child, strengthen the entire family, and prepare children for success in school and in life. Our programs promote school readiness by combining early learning with health, nutrition, and family services that give children a strong foundation and families the tools to thrive. Prenatal services are also available at no cost to expectant mothers, along with parental support that helps families move toward long-term stability and self-sufficiency.



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and Service Provider

