



HEAD START HAPPENINGS NEWSLETTER

WEST CENTRAL COMMUNITY ACTION

JANUARY 2026



A word for the Director

Hello January! I cannot believe we are halfway through our school year already! In December, members of our Leadership Team and Specialists came together for our December Data Review. Below I want to share a few positives, areas to work on, and potential action steps we are taking as a program to ensure continuous quality improvement:

-TPOT (Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool): The team noted a general improvement in TPOT scores across the board, ten out of the fourteen indicators were over 80% consistently. The team noted that as a program, we score high in the interview questions, which we feel shows that policies are in place and staff know what to do. As an area or opportunity of growth, we would like to continue working on teaching social skills and emotional competencies as well as teaching problem solving. As action steps the team assigned coaching based on scores as needed and will be adding a training to Academy + to introduce the PBIS kits and Second Step as we noted a lot of the new teachers had limited knowledge on these parts.

-Fall School Readiness Goals: As a program, we are meeting or exceeding 85% in all areas, which is where we want to be. Physical and Health continue to be our highest areas across the board and social emotional and cognition continue to be the lowest areas. We noted this data is matching what we were seeing in TPOT and teaching direct skills. The team noted a high number of IEP's and IFSP's and wonder if that has an impact.

-Family Night Attendance: Every center has completed their fall family night, and unfortunately it looks like attendance is down at these events in almost every center. We also noted some data entry errors in recording family nights. A few of the action steps we will take is to review the family night procedure with staff (including how to document) and encouraging engagement overall at these events.

-Home Visit and Socialization Attendance: After reviewing the data for home based home visits and socializations, it was determined that we have room for growth with documenting visits in some areas and socialization attendance. Our action steps include sending some of the EHS home based staff to IHSA networking and working with the socialization module in Child Plus for better reports. We would also like to see growth in the number of families attending socializations.

-Staff Survey: Overall, we had a good number of staff completing and returning the survey. Some of the positives: good suggestions on how to improve Learning Genie, staff have amazing responses to why they show up daily, good relationships between teams overall, and appreciative of communication. A few of the opportunities we want to grow are training and policies around Learning Genie, look at age groups and how to support staff with the age groups, continue to work on becoming fully staffed and getting subs, and provide training on technology. I will be putting out a more in depth look at the survey results soon!

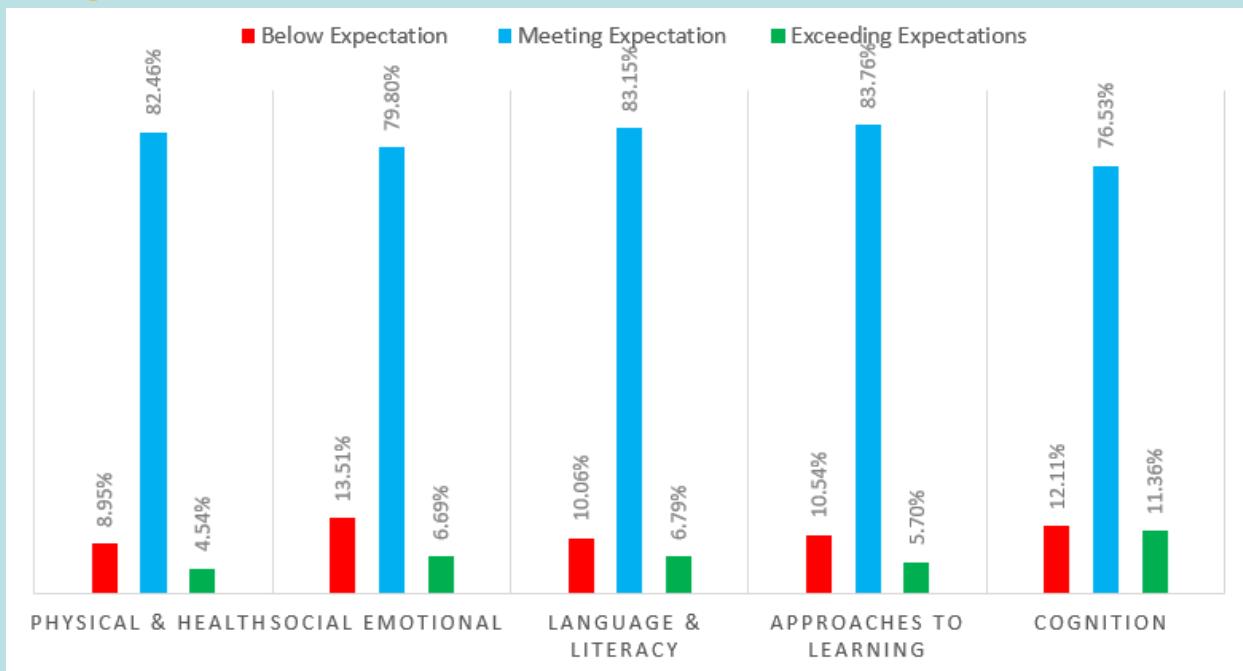
Overall, we continue to see growth in our data. Huge shout out to all staff on these accomplishments! Thanks for all you do for children, families, and the program. Can't wait to see what 2026 brings!

Danni Segebart, Head Start Director

Education News

Happy New Year everyone! I hope that you enjoyed your holidays and a little bit of "Rest and Relaxation" before we head into 2026! It is hard to believe that another year has already passed!

This month I would like to share our FALL Teaching Strategies GOLD checkpoint data. GOLD data is super important to monitor growth and is a program requirement. Furthermore, it is a glimpse of the children's abilities to meet & exceed our program's expectations. It also shows us the overall percentage of children falling below expectations. This helps us to plan with intentionality to assure the children show growth in all areas of development. Great job to teaching staff for getting this done accurately and on time! You are appreciated more than you know 😊



I want to remind everyone of the importance of frequent handwashing, sanitizing, and disinfecting. While the holidays are also a great time to rest and reset; it also brings with it lots of sickness as we come together to celebrate. Lastly, I would like to thank everyone for all your hard work and dedication to the program, children, families, and each other. We would not be where we are without ALL of you. Stay safe and warm😊

"A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning" Brad Henry

Jennifer Duff, Education Manager

From the Nurse's Desk...

Tested positive for flu during the holidays? Here's what you should do By Jacqueline Howard
Dec 23, 2025

As millions of Americans hit the road or take to the skies for the holidays, another seasonal traveler is picking up speed: influenza.

Flu activity is already rising across the country. In the week ending December 13, roughly 4% of visits to health care providers were for respiratory illnesses, and nearly 10,000 patients were hospitalized with influenza, according to the latest data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, released Friday. So far, three children already have died from flu-related causes this flu season.

Those numbers mean the virus may be closer to home than many families realize. Holiday gatherings could include someone just recovering from the flu, or someone beginning to feel sick. Should they still show up? How long should a visit be postponed?

As flu cases climb, here are the flu-related rules families should know this holiday season. If I'm having symptoms, when should I take a flu test? There are several over-the-counter flu tests available in the United States, and they can be taken at home as a nasal swab, similar to Covid-19 tests. Many doctors recommend taking a test as soon as you experience symptoms.

"Particularly if you're a person in a high-risk group," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"Those persons are people who are age 65 and older, anyone who has a chronic underlying medical condition, if you're immune compromised, if you're a pregnant person and very young children," he said. "Those are all people who are in high-risk, and once they have symptoms, that's the time to get tested, because we would have antivirals available to help keep you out of the hospital."

Flu symptoms usually start suddenly with fever, chills, headache, body aches and fatigue, Dr. Pamela Lindor, a pediatrician at Bluebird Kids Health in Jacksonville, Florida, said in an email.

While you should quickly start treatment and avoid exposing others when you test positive for flu, "if the over the counter test is negative but your symptoms are severe, consider getting a more accurate test from your doctor or urgent care center," she said.

Testing is key because once it is determined which respiratory illness you have, you can then receive appropriate treatment, Schaffner said. "Flu is not the only illness we're concerned about. Maybe you have Covid, and if you have Covid, we have another medication that could help keep you out of the hospital," he said.

At what point should I take antiviral medications for flu? Flu antiviral drugs, such as Tamiflu or Xofluza, are prescription medications, and they work best when started early, ideally within two days after flu symptoms begin.

"For the flu, if you are ill, the sooner you begin the antiviral, the more effective it is," Schaffner said. "There is the 48-hour rule. That is, for it to be maximally effective, you have to initiate treatment within the first 48 hours after you get symptoms. But even after 48 hours – and this is especially true for high-risk people – you can still have some modulating effect of the antivirals."

If I test positive, for how long should I avoid contact with others? As soon as someone starts to show symptoms, they should stay home and avoid contact with other people to not spread the virus.

"You're capable of transmitting the influenza virus the day before you get symptoms," Schaffner said. "But nonetheless, wear a mask and avoid other people in your family as much as possible until your symptoms start to abate and you've had no fever for 24 hours without using Tylenol."

"This will usually be at least 4-5 days," Lindor said. "Flu is most contagious starting the day before symptoms develop and continuing for about one week."

If I'm wearing a mask, can I still be around people for gatherings? Some people who have symptoms or fever might be tempted to still visit family or open Christmas gifts with loved ones, as long as they wear a mask, but Schaffner still warned against it. "Good handwashing is very important to prevent spread," Lindor said. "Common surfaces in the house should be disinfected."

Some doctors may prescribe antiviral medications to people who have been exposed to someone with flu, but they are not yet showing signs or symptoms themselves, especially if that person is in a high-risk group.

When do I know whether to go to the hospital? It's important to stay in contact with your doctor once you test positive for flu and experience worsening symptoms, especially if you are in a high-risk group, Schaffner said.

And with your doctor, "have those discussions about when it is that you need to go to the hospital," he said. "But difficulty breathing, coughing up blood, really feeling terrible, temperatures of 103 or higher – all of those things are indicators that you really need medical attention."

Some other "warning signs" that may require urgent medical attention include "dehydration, chest pain, lethargy, mental status changes, seizures or severe weakness," Lindor said. "Confusion, behavior changes, or high persistent fever for over 3 days also warrant urgent medical attention."

Is it too late to get a flu shot? There is still time to receive your seasonal flu shot if you haven't already. "There's more than one kind of influenza virus out there, and the vaccine helps prevent serious disease due to three different types of influenza virus."

A word from the PBIS Team...

Friendship skills

When we talk about friendship skills in early childhood, we are not just talking about sharing toys. Friendship skills include:

- Communication- expressing thoughts, needs and feelings and listening to peers.
- Sharing and taking turns
- Working together on tasks like building or puzzles
- Understanding and responding to others' emotions
- Working through disagreements
- Asking questions and inviting others to play.

So how do we teach these skills and provide opportunities throughout the children's day to practice and develop these skills?



- Provide play opportunities. Arrange for groups in your classroom to practice with different activities.
- Encourage children to use toys and activities that require teamwork.
- Help children to find solutions to their problems, for toddlers you can point out what the problem is that you see and talk about what solutions they could try as they are learning these skills.
- Teachers and other adults in the classroom can model for children or role play different scenarios.
- Have the children do friendship projects like partner dancing during music and movement. Have them make pictures for a friend or make pictures together to hang in the classroom.
- Social stories like "We Can Be Super Friends" is also a great way to talk about friendship skills and how to be a friend.
- Use your classroom puppets to show how to work out problems, tap and ask a friend to play, how to take turns, etc.
- Use visuals to help you teach the skills like the peer mediated skills posters. (email Jenny if you would like a set for your classroom)



Let your friend know that he is doing a good job.

Share Request



Ask your friend if you can play with one of his toys.

Your PBIS Team

Wellness Committee News!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the winter door decorating contest this year. It is always fun to see the creative spirit come alive! Congratulations to our winners:





Paula Nagel



Atlantic Head Start



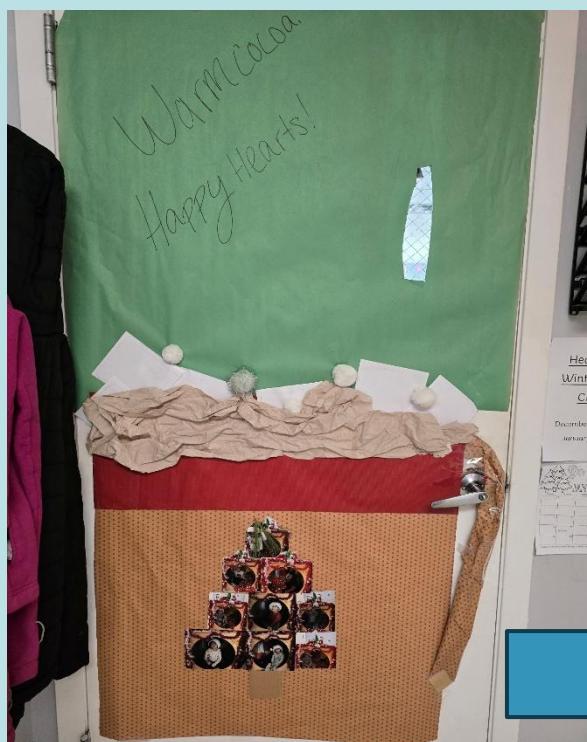
Red Oak EHS



Harlan HS



Harlan Food Service



Red Oak HS



Bridgette Laver



Tracy Reed



Danni Segebart

As a reminder, we are always looking for members to join our Wellness Committee, contact Jill Willenborg if interested! Thank you for your participation this year!



Staff Shout-out's

Please help us recognize and shout-out your co-workers and submit any shout-outs to dsegebart@westcca.org.

Shout-out to Amy Bollinger for stepping up without hesitation to assist in supporting Red Oak Head Start and Mills County Head Start. Your willingness to help and support others truly made such a positive impact. We're so grateful for all that you do 😊

Shout out to Urzula Limon Baca, Denison Family Advocate, for helping a family with barriers in having their child see a dental provider. You made an impact!

Shout out to Heather Dulberg for rolling with the punches with switching the Red Oak room all around! You are amazing!

Shout out and great work to Sarah Kelly. She keeps the cleanest space I've seen in a long time! And she ALWAYS has a smile on her face! Thanks for all you do everyday!

Shout out to Heather Dulberg and Andrea Weston for stepping in when unexpected changes came up in the Red Oak Head Start classroom. Your adaptability during unexpected changes and leading with such stellar problem-solving skills. Your willingness to help, calm approach, and dedication made a meaningful difference when it is needed most. We are truly grateful for your time, effort, and positive spirit—it did not go unnoticed and is deeply appreciated. ❤️

Shout out to Jennifer Rodriguez and Jade Ebrecht on their stellar CDA progress. You are almost there!

Shout out to Ana Chan for always stepping up and doing all the things necessary to ensure that consistency happens and always being open to just take the lead, so things run smoothly. Ana is a constant for the agency and is a true definition of a hardworking, dependable worker. Thank you, Ana, for all you do!!

Kudos to all the teaching staff that continue to show up and face another day when you have had such a hard time with challenging behaviors. Your efforts in trying to help these kiddos does not go unnoticed.

Shout out to Council Bluffs 1 Head Start staff- Deb and Emily! Thanks for having a big heart and hanging in throughout the process of a referral for challenging behaviors! You both are strong and nurturing teachers!

Shout out to Jenna Orr and Patty Nibbe! Thanks for all the help in making the Council Bluffs site flow so nicely when things come up! We couldn't do it without you two!

Shout out to Sarah Kelly, her kitchen runs so smoothly and stays sparkling clean! You are awesome and we are proud to have you at the Council Bluffs site.

Huge shout out and thank you to all the family advocates and home-based visitors for all their efforts in getting needed food and presents for children and families over the holidays. Lori Glissmann nominated a kiddo for Shop With A Cop, which he was chosen for, and countless others were given referrals of where to go to get help over the holidays for everything from food to winter coats, to toys for Christmas. Visitors and Advocates put in extra efforts in to make it a nice holiday for our families.

Work Anniversaries

Kris Evezic, Council Bluffs HS/EHS Education Support Coordinator, **41 years**

Linda Morris, Atlantic Food Service, **6 years**

Amber Rocha, Madison EHS Teacher, **5 years**

Samantha McAtee, ERSEA Specialist, **4 years**

Jennifer Rodriguez, EHS Red Oak Teacher, **2 years**

Jade Ebrecht, EHS Red Oak Teacher, **1 year**

Emily Ray, Mills County Assistant Teacher, **1 year**

Congratulations to all on your accomplishments and thank you for your continued dedication to children and families!

Head Start Happenings.....



Mills County filled their Kindness Tree throughout December.

Mapleton Head Start had lots of fun in December!



They checked out the fun decorations that the highschoolers put up in the hallways!



They visited the bank and decorated their Christmas tree with ornaments that they made!



During our bread study we mixed up pizza dough and all took turns putting it in the pan





They are good chefs! The pizza was tasty!



During their bread study, Mapleton also “painted” their bread. They toasted it for a colorful snack! (“paint” with butter, milk, food coloring).





The school invited us to do their dress up days before Christmas. This day was dress like an elf or santa!



"Look I made a snowman"





Mapleton making reindeer food.



Our last day before break was pajama day! We started our day with a visit from SANTA!

Events/ Dates to Remember

January 2nd- Jennifer Duff
January 7th- Heidi Millett
January 8th- Katie Cannon, Harlan EHS Teacher

Staff Birthdays...

December 1st- David Peterson, Program Operations Coordinator
December 17th- Danni Segebart, Head Start Director
December 17th- Samantha Villalovos, Harlan EHS Teacher
December 19th- Jasmin Marron, Denison Assistant Teacher
December 21st- Jennifer Rodriguez, Red Oak EHS Teacher
December 23rd- Melissa Kaye, Council Bluffs Teacher



**If you notice that I have missed you, or someone else's birthday, please let me know. That means it is not in our Child Plus system correctly. Thanks for your help!

Open Positions:

- EHS Home Based Visitor
- EHS Floater Teacher CB
- EHS Floater Teacher Harlan
- EHS Teacher Harlan
- Harlan Head Start Assistant Teacher (2)
- Mills County Assistant Teacher
- Denison Bilingual Family Advocate
- ESC Mills County and Red Oak

**IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE INTERESTED, ENCOURAGE THEM TO APPLY AT
[HTTPS://WWW.WESTCENTRALCA.ORG/CAREERS](https://www.westcentralca.org/careers)