

ANNUAL REPORT

OHIO VALLEY EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVE

2023-24



Table of Contents

Message from the CEO	01
Staff Directory	02
Board of Directors	04
Services Chart & Purpose Statement	05
Financial Report	06
2023-24 Big Wins	07
PROGRAM REPORTS	
District Support Services	08
CRRSA	10
Deeper Learning	12
Educator Success	14
School-Based Mental Health Grant	16
School Nutrition Services	18
Facility Services	20
Exceptional Children Services/Pre-ETS	21
iLEAD Academy	22
Teach Tech KY	24
Head Start	25
Head Start Feature: Coat Drive	30
Grants Development & OVEF	32

CEO Message 2023-24

“The Evidence Remains”: How We’re Fighting Burnout at OVEC



I can’t remember a time in my life when I wasn’t fascinated with Batman. Whether it is a book, cartoon, comic, or movie, I have never grown tired of the caped crusader. In the summer of 2024, I came across a Batman comic which accurately describes how many educators have felt these last few years.

In “The Evidence Remains” (Batman: The Brave and the Bold, Issue 13), Batman is experiencing an emotional crisis—what we might all recognize as burnout. Every day is the same: “Suit up. Drive Off. Help. Hurt. Return. Heal.”

Batman begins to doubt the difference he is making. “There’s no means to measure it. No knowing my impact.... Do I matter?” He realizes he needs something other than his routine—evidence. He needs “tangible proof.” Evidence of what he has accomplished will keep him going out each night to protect and serve. The comic book ends with a visual of evidence he has collected from his many battles—many of which are masks of villains he defeated.

Educators are a different type of hero with a very similar struggle. The day-to-day work is demanding, sometimes requiring emotional and physical healing of those we serve. Those demands can make us question the difference we are making. Every chance I get, I am encouraging educators to collect evidence. Adorn the walls of your classroom with exemplary work from students, thank-you notes from parents, and social media recognitions from your school or district.

OVEC’s 2023-2024 Annual Report is a collection of evidence. We have never made a bigger difference in our region. With the amazing team we’ve assembled and the deep relationships we’ve formed with our districts, our impact will increase in the year ahead. During the 2023-2024 school year, OVEC’s board adopted a new strategic plan with a new vision statement, mission statement, and core values. The new vision statement has been a powerful motivator for us in recent months: Empowering Educators so Students Thrive. The educators OVEC supports through professional learning—and those we employ through programs such as Head Start, iLEAD Academy, and School-Based Mental Health Services—are key influences on student well-being.

OVEC is passionately committed to giving these educator-heroes resources, strategies, and support, while showing them evidence of the difference they make.

Staff Directory

Administration & Support

Jason Adkins

Chief Executive Officer

Chrissy Jones

Chief Academic Officer/Deputy
CEO

Courtney Murdock

Chief Human Resources Officer

Kathy House

Director of Educator Success

Kristina Wood

Director of Finance

Neal Anderson

Director of Technology

Samuel McIver

Technology Specialist

Vickie Johnson

Grant Writer

Kasey Wilmsmeyer

Communications Specialist

Renee Spalding

Development Associate

Santina Plottner

Project Director for School-Based
Mental Health Services

Lori Williams

School Nutrition Analyst

Mark Ryles

District Facilities Consultant

Dennis Horn

Emergency Assistance to Non-
Public Schools Program
Coordinator

Liz French

Executive Assistant/Office
Manager

Jane Napper

Human Resources Coordinator

Amber Gibson

Human Resources Coordinator

Michelle Breckenridge

Human Resources Coordinator

Lacey Adkins

Accounting Coordinator

Lauren Tindle

Accounting Coordinator

Alex Russ

Staff Accountant

Kara Owens

Guest and Staff Services
Coordinator (Shelbyville)

Briana Antonelli

Guest and Staff Services
Coordinator (Middletown)

Exceptional Children Services

Christel Bogar

ECS Director

Mallory Vice

Low Incidence Consultant

Chris Sweigart

ECS Consultant

Tricia Kitzmiller

ECS Consultant

Dr. Debbie Mays

ECS Strategies Consultant

Lynn Schwallie

Literacy Consultant

Kricket McClure

ECS Math Consultant

Carrie Stith-Webster

College & Career
Readiness Consultant

Holli Blevins

ARP Transition Grant
Coordinator

Alicia Bartley

Administrative
Coordinator

CRRSA

Lisa Smith

Collaborative Response to
Reimagine Schools for All
Coordinator

Amy James

Learning Acceleration
Specialist

Rebecca Martin

Learning Acceleration
Specialist

Jennifer Roederer

Learning Acceleration
Specialist

Edward Oakley

Learning Acceleration
Specialist

Deeper Learning

Dr. Carmen Coleman

Chief of Transformational
Learning & Leading

Lacey Eckels

Design Specialist

Rachel Albright

Design Specialist

Adam Watson

Design Specialist

District Support Services

Dr. Alexandra Hughes

DEIB Consultant &
Strategist

Susan Robertson

Director of Professional
Learning & Support

Charley Preston

Stop School Violence
Project Coordinator

Head Start

Dr. Erika Nygard

Director of Head Start Programs

Kelsey Turley

Program Operations Manager

Heather Hood

ERSEA and Family Engagement Manager

Patty Wireman

ERSEA Specialist

Carla Robinson

ERSEA Specialist

Deanna New

Data Coordinator

Caroline Boggess

ERSEA Clerk

Tiffany Hughes

ERSEA Clerk

Shronda Powers

ERSEA Clerk

Tara Truckor

Family Engagement Specialist

Rachael Noyes

Family Engagement Specialist

Tamara Hoover

Family Engagement Specialist

Jasmine Exum

Family Engagement Specialist

Mary Fleece

Programmatic Training Coordinator

Amy Glass

Administrative Assistant

Kim Luna

Program Services Coordinator

Debra Sierakowski

Program Services Coordinator

Jessica Garrett

Facilities Manager

Gil Jones

Facilities Technician

Christian Smith

Facilities Technician

Donna Taylor

Education Manager

Gabrielle Kemper

Behavior Intervention Specialist

Samantha Behmke

Behavior Intervention Specialist

Tienna Postell

Behavior Intervention Specialist

Jude Peckinpaugh

Behavior Intervention Specialist

Rachel Deckard

Behavior Intervention Specialist

Tia Smith

Disabilities Consultant

Ashley Wild

Disabilities Consultant

Berlinda Stockdale

Disabilities Consultant

Angela Rice

Child Development Specialist

Kim Fogg

Child Development Specialist

Kasey Goss

Child Development Specialist

Tomi Scriber

Child Development Specialist

Kate Hill

Child Development Specialist

Jennifer Goodlett

Health & Nutrition Services Manager

Sarah Adams

Health Specialist

Cindy Monroe

Health Specialist

Erin Mahoney

Health Specialist

Gentry Harrell

Health Specialist

Jenny Benner

CCP Program Operations Coordinator

Elizabeth Kelty

Quality Mentor

Jenny Tyra

Quality Mentor

Tre'Sean Durham

CCP Family Engagement Specialist

iLEAD Academy

Alicia Sells

Director of Innovation and Strategic Relations

Jenna Gray

iLEAD Director

John Ashcraft

Engineering Teacher

Molly Sullivan

Leadership Mentor for iLEAD and EIR Grant (Teach Tech KY)

Eric Gray

Computer Science Teacher

Casey Duvall

Math Teacher

Beaumont Rand

English Teacher

Andrea Skaggs

School Nutrition

Procurement

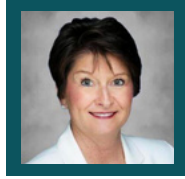
Specialist/iLEAD Academy and Teach Tech KY

Executive Assistant

Board of Directors

Ms. Karen Solise

Superintendent,
Anchorage Ind. Schools



Dr. Jim Masters

Superintendent, Henry
County Schools



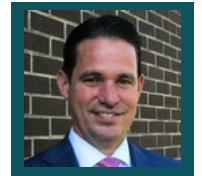
Dr. Jesse Bacon

Chair, Superintendent,
Bullitt County Schools



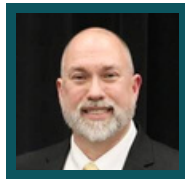
Dr. Marty Pollio

Superintendent, Jefferson
County Schools



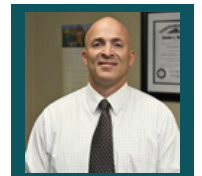
Mr. Casey Jaynes

Superintendent, Carroll
County Schools



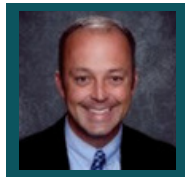
Dr. Jason Radford

Vice-Chair, Superintendent,
Oldham County Schools



Dr. Buddy Berry

Superintendent, Eminence
Ind. Schools



Mr. Reggie Taylor

Superintendent, Owen
County Schools



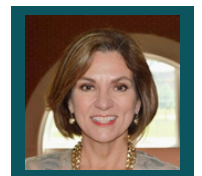
Dr. Sheri Satterly

Superintendent, Frankfort
Ind. Schools



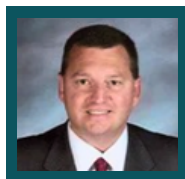
Dr. Sally Sugg

Superintendent, Shelby
County Schools



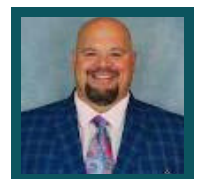
Mr. Chuck Cash

Superintendent, Gallatin
County Schools



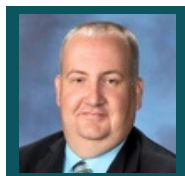
Dr. Willie Foster

Superintendent, Spencer
County Schools



Mr. Matt Morgan

Superintendent, Grant
County Schools



Mr. Todd Neace

Superintendent, Trimble
County Schools





OVEC MISSION

Making educators' work more fulfilling and sustainable through intentional opportunities, resources, and relationships.

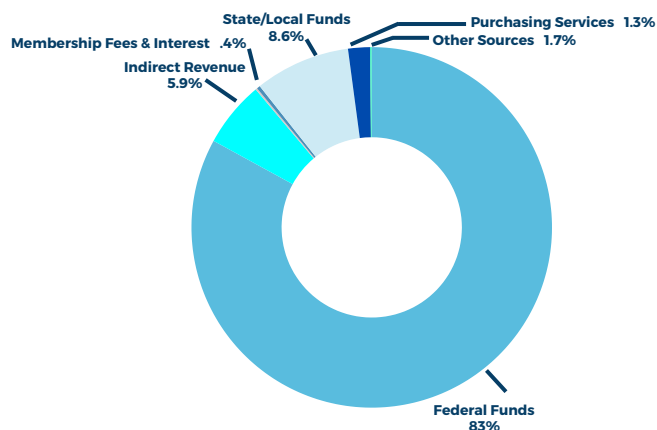
Financial Report 2023-24

Total Agency Budget

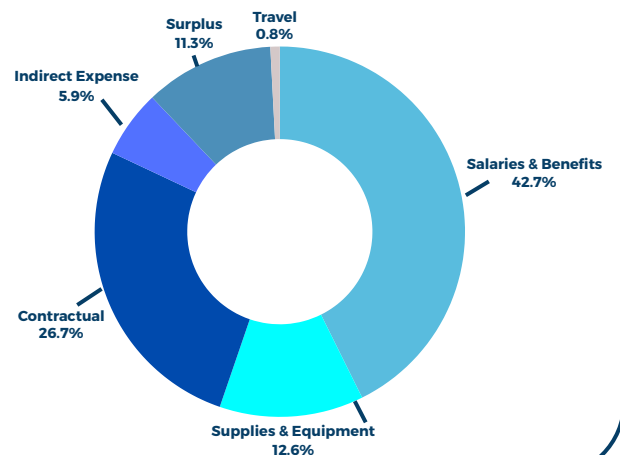
REVENUE	
Federal Funds	\$47,903,533
Indirect Revenue	3,406,610
Membership Fees	89,767
State/Local Funds	4,942,825
Purchasing Services	1,133,432
Other Sources	84,547
Interest	176,619
TOTAL	\$57,737,334

EXPENSES	
Salaries	\$19,983,066
Fringe Benefits	4,653,571
Contractual	15,439,372
Indirect Expense	3,406,610
Supplies	7,228,562
Travel	474,543
Equipment	40,013
Unbudgeted General Fund Surplus	6,511,598
TOTAL	\$57,737,334

Total Agency Income



Total Agency Expenditures



2023-24 Big Wins!

Educator Success

Because of districts' needs to hire and retain staff, OVEC added a new strategic priority. Educator Success staff support the recruitment and training of teachers through alternate certification, high-quality rank-change programs, and creating an educator pipeline starting in high schools through a well-planned Teaching and Learning Pathway.

29

Head Start Programs

This year, we opened 4 new or renovated Head Start sites, for a total of 29 Head Start, Early Head Start (EHS), and EHS-Child Care Partnership programs serving up to 950 students.

19 Active Network/Role Groups coordinated by District Support Services

\$5.2 million

for mental health services

With a new grant, OVEC provided 11 schools with counselors who worked directly with students.

8 million+ meals
procured
with OVEC's help
(not including Jefferson County)

.....

Reduced Dues; Increased Services!

8,000+

individual teachers and groups coached by Learning Acceleration Specialists during the administration of the CRRSA grant. Consultation focused on finding high-quality instructional resources, how to use the resource in the local context (page-to-practice), and how to increase MTSS to close gaps.

17 out of 24
iLEAD Academy graduates received associate degrees from JCTC

\$22,575,793

in new and ongoing grants

33

teachers completed Teach Tech KY, a rank-change program focused on computer and computational thinking skills.

43 are signed up for the 2024-25 program.

.....

3,695

Hours of Professional Learning (PL), coaching, and consultation for Exceptional Children Services (ECS) teachers in the OVEC region

New Cafeteria Equipment
(and more benefits!) for 3 districts through the HMI Grant

Joyful Rigor

The OVEC Deeper Learning team is reimagining the student experience. They led their first cohort of 23 Teacher Navigators and helped districts design Profiles of a Learner/Graduate and lesson plans that increase student stamina and lasting learning.

School Culture & Climate Improvement in OVEC Districts

5,446 sq. ft.

of new training space and offices at our Middletown location

District Support Services 2023-24

Fueling the Future with Inspired Educators

“I really wish I had known this going into my first year,” remarked a new teacher as she left the “All Teachers Can” workshop, cosponsored by District Support Services (DSS) and Collaborative Response to Reimagine Schools for All (CRRSA). “I had a frustrating year and now I realize I didn’t understand my students’ needs. Thank you for hosting this!” At the workshop, educational leader Dr. Ruby Payne discussed various barriers students face to academic success, including economic and emotional poverty, and how teachers can mitigate these barriers with motivational, relational, and instructional best practices. More than 170 teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators attended the workshop, and the feedback was overwhelming.

“Ruby’s research helps all of us succeed as educators,” said Chrissy Jones, Chief Academic Officer/Deputy CEO of OVEC. “We are in a new climate and culture of school. Mental health needs and academic concerns have grown post-pandemic. Educators want help knowing how to reach every student. Even the Kentucky state legislature recognizes the challenges. They’ve mandated that every school K-12 create and implement a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) plan, not just our early elementary grades. OVEC’s role in helping local schools and districts is more relevant than ever.”



OVEC DSS is responding by expanding its work with MTSS teams and Network and Role Groups. They also continue to offer Professional Learning (PL) like the “All Teachers Can” workshop and support first-time teachers through continued administration of the First-Time, Long-Time (FTLT) grant.

This year, four districts partnered with OVEC DSS to improve their MTSS plans: Gallatin, Oldham, Shelby, and Spencer. Support has ranged from advisory to leading the charge, but all of these districts are ahead of the curve for the new legislative mandate taking effect in 2025. OVEC districts actively participate in the MTSS District Coordinator Network, a front-line opportunity for districts to have access to practitioners and resources to educate their staff to understand what MTSS looks like at every level K-12.

Educators continue to value OVEC's Network and Role Groups, coordinated through DSS. "One of the best outcomes of our networks is how districts share resources and encourage practitioners new to their roles. Every district has different strengths and it is amazing to see what happens when they come together," says Susan Robertson, Director of Professional Learning and Support.

New Network and Role Groups have been added in the 2023-24 school year. The OVEC Library/Media Specialists Network has quickly garnered the attention of state leaders. The OVEC School Counselor Network (SCN) and Principal Network have also had significant impact, collaborating with other cooperatives and the Kentucky Department for Education to create a statewide network. "This expands the opportunity for our principals and school counselors to network, share ideas, and collaborate on goals and projects," explains Susan. DSS is working to add a District Assessment Coordinators (DAC) network, as well as continuing to strengthen the existing 19 networks.



OVEC supported more than 100 new teachers through FTLT, a monthly cohort that met to share ideas and receive PL, classroom support, and stipends toward tuition. The FTLT conference in June was wildly successful, with more than 70 participants. Each OVEC district receives \$20,353 in FTLT monies that can be used for tuition reimbursement for participants. The addition of Dr. Kathy House as Director of Educator Success has expanded OVEC's efforts to establish a teacher pipeline. Kathy partners with Susan to make sure FTLT participants have what they need for success. If you have questions or needs in the area of MTSS, network and role groups, FTLT, and PL trainings for your district, please contact Chrissy at cjones@ovec.org or Susan at srobertson@ovec.org.

Network & Role Work Groups

- Board of Directors (Superintendents)
- Ohio Valley Supervisors Organization (OVSO)
- Human Resources (HR) Directors
- Director of Special Education (DoSE)
- School Nutrition Directors
- Library/Media Specialists Network
- Multi-Lingual Learners Work Group
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Coordinators
- School Psychologists (School Psychs)
- Behavior Network
- Occupational Therapist and Physical Therapists (OT/PT)
- Speech Language Pathologists (SLP)
- Preschool Coordinators/Directors
- Ohio Valley Organization of Principals (OVOP)
- Ohio Valley Instructional Coaches Network (OVICN)
- School Counselor Network (SCN)
- 504 Coordinators
- Gifted & Talented Network (GTN)
- School-Based Mental Health (SBMH)
- New in 24-25! District Assessment Coordinators (DAC)

CRRSA 2023-24

Fueling Classrooms with Top-Tier Learning

In the past, Maddi Shepler* made it through about two-thirds of her curriculum' before testing and end-of-year assemblies interrupted learning. But this year, Maddi's principal introduced new curriculum, set priorities, and made it clear: let's finish the work. With help from Learning Acceleration Specialists (LASs) on OVEC's Collaborative Response to Reimagine Schools for All (CRRSA) team, Maddi's teaching team received coaching regarding student engagement and help knowing how to implement the curriculum in creative ways that held with integrity to Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS). Maddi's school in an OVEC district saw many students reach and exceed their stretch goals on the end-of-year district assessment. The district expects to see this growth reflected not only in the individual students' future success but in the state assessment and accountability system, as well.

CRRSA specialists focused much of their time this year on helping schools like Maddie's discover high-quality instructional resources (HQIRs), learn to move curriculum from page to practice, and build capacity for teachers to continue making improvements in content delivery. CRRSA specialists made more than 4,000 contacts this school year and about 8,000 over the life of the grant.



"We think of ourselves as Thought Partners for district leaders and teachers," said Lisa Smith, CRRSA Coordinator. "We ask questions to see where they want to take their schools, then provide support and ideas to get them there. Most schools need some blend of improved engagement and curriculum. We at OVEC help with both."

One area of exceptional CRRSA success has been “Engagement Within” workshops, which the team curated for districts’ and schools’ local contexts, as well as for regional PL events. The workshops explored how to personalize content based on the needs of the classroom. One participant said, “After attending the workshop, I am full of enthusiasm to forge a creative environment for my students.” Another shared that he sometimes loses steam, but the CRRSA team reminded him that the time and energy he puts in brings lasting results for his students.

Rebecca Martin, LAS, agrees, “Every district wants to see growth in their students. We at OVEC help them discover curriculum that is just right for their setting, learn how to take that curriculum from page to practice, and build interest and engagement. Those we met with saw rewarding growth.”



The CRRSA team also continued Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) consulting. If you have questions about curriculum, engagement, KAS, SEL, or MTSS please reach out!

Deeper Learning 2023-24

Fueling Lives with Learning that Lasts

“I don’t think my students have ever had such rigorous content before. At the same time, they’ve never been as engaged. Student work this year is amazing—it’s about much more than grades. They are remembering what they learn. Teacher Navigators has reinvigorated me as a teacher and has completely changed my approach to instruction,” says Chad Collins, middle school teacher at Spencer County Middle School.



Teacher Navigators, just one of several efforts of OVEC’s Deeper Learning team, has quickly become one of the region’s favorite programs since its inception in the 2022-23 school year. This year’s cohort of 23 forward-thinking teachers grew in their capacity to design memorable learning experiences. These experiences move students from merely passing assessments to being able to apply their learning to complex situations. The cohort represented teachers from a wide variety of grades and subjects.

“Navigators are breathing life into our schools and our profession through designing innovative, student-centered practices and meaningful collaboration across districts,” says Rachel Albright, Deeper Learning Design Specialist, who helps guide Teacher Navigator cohorts through their year. And the cohorts so far have prioritized this opportunity.



“Because of the strain on schools to find subs, our Teacher Navigators even asked if we could meet on Saturdays. To me, this shows such selfless dedication to helping every child succeed. It also shows how badly teachers want time to connect with others to keep going in the classroom,” explains Dr. Carmen Coleman, Chief of Transformational Learning and Leading at OVEC. During the sessions, Design Specialists always seek to immerse the Navigators in experiences that

make learning stick. “So many of us have only experienced school in its most traditional sense. We believe it is crucial to immerse teachers in the kind of learning experiences we want them to create for learners. It’s so important that they get a taste of what a true personalized, competency-based learning journey might feel like,” says Carmen.



In addition to working with Navigators, Design Specialists also partnered with districts to help design and build capacity for supporting their Profiles of a Learner/Graduate. The Profile—a co-created, community-wide document—becomes a living vision statement, one that clearly defines the skills and knowledge students will need to thrive as adults. By creating a shared Profile of a Learner, communities are reimagining and redefining what it means to be successful. Ideally, they begin to rethink not only learning experiences themselves, but the systems needed to support those experiences.

Deeper Learning Design Specialists focus on five Key Transformations created through a series of simple shifts to support teachers in designing meaningful, relevant learning experiences and journeys. “We recognize that just as important as changing the learning experience for students is to change the teacher experience, as well. Their work has to be fulfilling and sustainable in order to accomplish what we need to for our students,” Carmen shares.

Success stories from Deeper Learning this year include:

- Carroll County partnered with Deeper Learning to redesign and rollout their Profile of a Learner.
- Bullitt, Oldham, and Henry Counties established special Teacher Navigator-like cohorts for teachers in their districts to provide space for teachers to share, learn, and grow together as they seek to transform the student experience.
- Eminence Independent hosted a two-day School on Fire Institute just for the OVEC region.
- Frankfort Independent, along with several others, were part of a special Community of Practice focused on performance-based credit.
- 25 teachers and educational leaders in the OVEC region visited the Northern Cass District in North Dakota to observe and explore their personalized, competency-based systems.
- Introduced 27 new Teacher Navigators for the 2024-25 school year.

If you'd like to see how Deeper Learning can positively impact the lives of your students, reach out to Carmen at ccoleman@ovec.org.



Educator Success 2023-24

Fueling the Future of Our Schools

Joel Vanhooose worked in Higher Education for fifteen years in advising, transfer, and admissions roles. “My career in Higher Ed had gotten to a point where I was in more daily Zoom meetings with staff than in-person meetings with students. I needed a change but still wanted to work with students. After hearing about an open teaching position at Grant County High School, I made the leap into a new job and full-time grad school for my teaching certification,” Joel said. But he didn’t know how he could make it happen—life was busy and tuition was expensive. Going back to school seemed impossible...until Dr. Kathy House, Director of Educator Success at OVEC, connected him with the resources and support he needed to make his dream a reality. Joel received help with tuition and mentorship through an ongoing OVEC program called First-Time, Long-Time (FTLT) and loved his first full year in his sophomore English classroom in Grant County. “Changing my career and going back to school was scary but felt right. Being supported by OVEC was an awesome confirmation that I made the right choice going into teaching,” he shares.

When OVEC recently developed its strategic plan, Educator Workforce was identified as strategic priority number one. Since 2020, schools have struggled to retain and train staff. Districts have expressed their need for extra help. They want to find the right people to bring out the best in their students. They want to learn how to thrive in a new era of instruction with many social-emotional and attention-engagement concerns. So the OVEC board decided to create a position that would connect teachers to alternate and rank-change certification programs, provide mentoring and guidance for new teachers, and even inspire the next generation of educators. And the prospects for OVEC to build a fully-equipped, high-quality teacher pipeline in this region have exploded with the addition of this position.



Kathy House began her year reaching out to each of the 14 OVEC districts to hear their needs. She partnered with other departments within OVEC, as well as the University of Louisville (UofL), Jefferson Community and Technical College (JCTC), UK Next Generation ChangeMakers CEO Program, Spalding University, and 2Revolutions to create the following opportunities:

- OVEC, in partnership with UofL, built an Option 7 Alternate Certification Institute program. This program is only the third in the state approved by the Education Professional Standards Board. Candidates must have a Bachelor's degree and meet the requirements for an approved certification area. This is an 18-month program starting during the fall or summer session certification via Institute classes, eliminating a more expensive and lengthy traditional university teacher-education program. Candidates will receive temporary provisional certification enabling them to teach while obtaining certification.
- OVEC connected with and placed almost 100 teachers in three regional high-quality rank-change programs: University of Kentucky (UK) ChangeMakers, TeachTech KY, and 2Revolutions Agency by Design through Spalding University.
- OVEC connected dozens of teachers to Modern Classroom Project, a national professional learning program that teaches research-backed practices for responding to individual student needs and using technology to promote a student-centered learning environment.
- During the 22-23 school year, OVEC received grant money from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to support educators seeking certification. During the 23-24 school year the OVEC board of directors decided to continue this valuable program with monies from general fund. Each OVEC district received about \$20,000 through the FTLT grant; this supports teachers pursuing Option 6, Option 9, or Rank-Change certifications with tuition reimbursement. For the 24-25 school year the OVEC board expanded this program. In addition to the previous funds, the OVEC board of directors voted to provide every member district with \$12,000 in tuition-reimbursement funds to help two educators (\$6,000/each) go back to school in pursuit of teacher certification through the new option 7 program.
- OVEC, in partnership with UofL and JCTC, is working to establish a registered teacher apprenticeship program in high schools through the districts' Teaching and Learning College- & Career-Ready Pathway. Seven districts are paving the way by assigning mentors and making room in their master schedules. The goal is that high schoolers who commit to the Teaching and Learning Pathway will earn enough dual credit to finish their education degrees at UofL in two years after graduation, as well as receive paid stipends during part of their apprenticeship. OVEC, UofL and JCTC have applied for a Teacher Quality Project grant to help defray costs of this new initiative, but OVEC is committed to grow this opportunity regardless of grant support.
- Kathy led 12 professionals in a Community of Practice Cohort for teachers leading the Teaching and Learning Pathway at OVEC districts. She provided support and guidance about how to strengthen the pathway in the years to come. It is from this community of practice that the idea for the apprenticeship came about.
- Susan Robertson, OVEC Director of Professional Learning and Support, and Kathy partnered to support more than 100 new teachers through FTLT, a monthly cohort that met to share ideas and receive coaching, classroom support, and stipends toward tuition. The FTLT conference in June was wildly successful, with more than 80 participants.

Kathy will welcome two Educator Success Consultants this fall to continue this expanding work. Reach out to Kathy at khouse@ovec.org for help with anything concerning Educator Success!

School-Based Mental Health Grant 2023-24

Fueling Readiness with Face-to-Face Care

When Moises* was 10 years old, he traveled from Mexico to the United States under blankets in the bed of an animal delivery truck. He had been separated from his mother and living with his grandmother for several years. In middle school, he encountered a teacher who helped him believe he would be able to make progress. But when a new student joined and picked on him incessantly, he withdrew and started to get into fights. How can a school help a student dealing with so much?

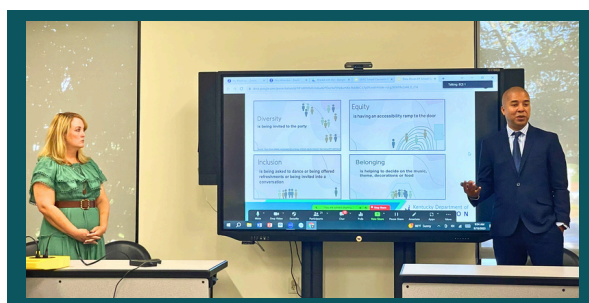
A full seventy-five percent of U.S. high school students express boredom, sadness, anger, fear, and stress while in school.¹ Some have experienced significant trauma like Moises. Our kids are in crisis—and that carries over into the classroom. “Many people don’t make the connection between academics and mental health, but the two radically impact each other. Students can’t engage with academic content if they are experiencing anxiety and depression. OVEC is doing all we can to help students directly and also model



for schools how to reach students with face-to-face support,” says Santina Plottner, Director of School Based Mental Health Services.

Santina administers a \$5.2 million grant OVEC received to expand school-based mental health services in high-need districts. In the 2023-24 school year, the grant provided 11 school-based counselors in 9 high-need districts. The OVEC grant is part of a total of \$40 million of federal funding coming to Kentucky, which was pursued by Lieutenant Governor Jacqueline Coleman as part of her student mental health initiative.

“The goal we have for this grant is to provide in-classroom and individual counseling to improve student mental health through a multi-tiered system of support. We are also providing training and underwriting for schools to use an excellent social-emotional learning curriculum called CharacterStrong. Most districts have seen an amazing change in the climate of their schools,” Santina shares.



One big push this year that will continue into next is teaching mental health clinicians and community partners how to provide ample support to schools. “We are helping clinicians understand the school setting and pursue re-specialization to work within schools. I am working hard to expand access to one-on-one counseling for students who need it by informing directors of special education and instructional supervisors how to sustain mental health support in schools by exploring reimbursement options through Medicaid,” Santina explains.



While all districts have received consultation and services through Santina’s role, one amazing success story is Carroll County Middle School. Carroll County Middle School was identified in 2022 by the Kentucky Department of Education’s (KDE) School Report Card as a district in need of comprehensive support and improvement. Principal Robin Stephenson and Superintendent Casey Janes immediately went to work. With input by OVEC consultants and the KDE, they transformed the school climate and culture. No stone was left unturned to impact students. From painting murals on walls and creating a home-base system to partnering with teachers, students, and families to make sure mental health was addressed through Care Solace, a service that serves schools and matches needs with providers, the whole community has gotten involved. This year’s test scores reveal significant learning improvement. “The learning came after kids felt safe, engaged, and interested,” Santina explains. “Carroll County is seeing results on every level because of the work they’ve done to meet social and mental-health needs.”

Santina continues her work with the School Counselor Network and the School-Based Mental Health Network, has hired a Crisis Response Consultant, and has served herself during times of crisis in OVEC districts. “The work is different every day, but OVEC is finding a way to get relevant help to schools at the moment they need it,” she says.

School Nutrition Services 2023-24

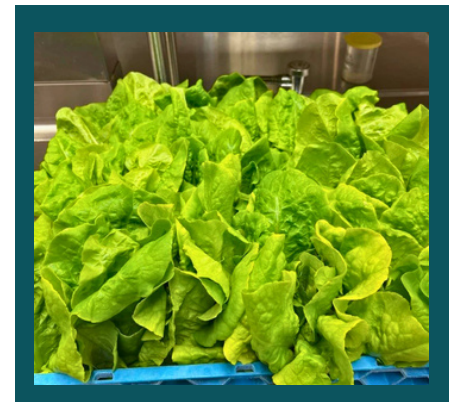
Fueling Lives with Good Food

When Grant County Nutrition Director Maggy Livingood saw student Chaz* munching on only a bag of spicy corn chips for lunch, she encouraged him to get a plate. He shrugged it off, even though he was an athlete. The next day, when Maggy presented a nutrition lesson, she saw Chaz in the class. She tied nutrition facts to success in sports and peak performance. In the cafeteria later, he smiled and showed her the apple and carrots he had picked up in the line.

Grant County was one of three districts in the OVEC region to receive the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services Healthy Meals Incentives (HMI) grant; other recipients are Frankfort Independent and Spencer County. Maggy says receiving the HMI funds has been a privilege. It has increased the nutrition on students' plates and also on their minds! With grant support, she's been able to increase nutrition education in classrooms, a role she is well-suited for as a long-time teacher. She's also been able to create student discussion groups, which she calls SNACs (Student Nutrition Advisory Councils), as well as healthy eating digital curriculum, displayed as slides on televisions installed in cafeterias, purchased with grant monies. The grant has also provided funds for capital and small equipment upgrades for all schools in Grant County.

"We have needed new equipment for a long time. The grant has helped us overcome challenges small rural districts face. We have increased our capacity for offering healthy options," Maggy says. The new equipment makes it feasible to provide meals like breakfast apple nachos drizzled with protein-rich peanut butter and granola and grab-and-go salads and subs.

One of the most unexpected positive results is the way high school students are interacting with staff every day. "At the high school, we now have two five-well hot food bars in our lines. Our Asian, fiesta, and pasta bars have been extremely popular. Students have to converse with staff to fill their plate. They've practiced manners and self-advocacy. They have tried new foods and flavors. The grant has been game changing for us—it's about more than healthy food," Maggy shares.



Grant County's story is just a slice of the good happening among OVEC Nutrition Services for our hugely successful 2023-24 school year. For the first time ever, nutrition directors in OVEC districts were able to experience a behind-the-scenes look at a major food supplier's distribution process. Gordon Food Service in Shepherdsville hosted a day-long tour of the plant and warehouse. Directors increased their understanding of the food supply chain and learned names and faces of contacts in their industry. Applause goes to all our hardworking school nutrition directors. More than 8 million meals were served in OVEC districts (this number does not include JCPS). Special recognition goes to Toni Jackson, Trimble County, for being selected for the Chef Ann Foundation's Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship for the 2024 Cohort. Trimble County also received a statewide Tray of the Month award from the KDE for a colorful poke bowl created with Kim Mosser and Lori Williams, former and current OVEC School Nutrition Consultant.

OVEC Nutrition Services continue to provide guidance with USDA compliance, price negotiation, menu cycles, and food allergies, from the youngest Early Head Start babies to graduating seniors. If you need assistance with anything connected to food and nutrition, don't hesitate to reach out to Lori Williams at loriwilliams@ovec.org.



Facility Services 2023-24

Fueling Schools with Strong Buildings

Facility Services is unique among the areas of OVEC's work. Mark Ryles, AIA, OVEC Facilities Consultant, advises all 171 school districts in Kentucky in cooperation with the Kentucky Purchasing Cooperative (KPC, also known as PurchasePros). While OVEC is his home base, Mark provides facility consulting and works to find grant money, maximize energy savings, and negotiate bids on products and contracts for schools across the state. KPC charges a minimal administrative fee to districts for support with their projects, and some of that fee returns directly to OVEC to support cooperative education services, as well as fund Mark's position and support regional projects. Since the inception of the Facilities Consultant position, Mark has guided 137 school districts in \$258,618,663 of construction, and all of them in an advisory and negotiating capacity.

This year, Mark's team has researched, developed, and submitted a "Renew America Schools" grant application. Called "Operation Appalachia," the grant could yield a \$15 million prize over three phases for five of the poorest counties in America: Elliot, Lee, Menifee, Owsley, and Wolfe counties in Eastern Kentucky. This would cover renovations on 21 facilities by procured partner Ameresco corporation. Similarly, Mark's team is supporting another grant proposal in Western Kentucky, through our new partnership there with Ascendant Facility Partners.

Mark is guiding Greenup County through \$16 million in renovations secured through a Renew America Schools grant they won last year (plus a \$1.7 million matching state grant). The Greenup project includes a wonderful bonus: the district is establishing a revolving Green Fund for students. This Fund will be paid for from the energy savings resulting from the renovation. It will provide students the opportunity to learn about energy efficiency, renewable energy, building systems and operations, and construction principles. The Green Fund will add to Greenup's STEM program and encourage vocational pathways in a profoundly unemployed community. Although these projects aren't in OVEC districts geographically, they are crucial for the advancement of education in our state and networking regarding facility upgrades/ideas.

Some OVEC district projects this year include roofs in Henry, Shelby, and Spencer Counties and bleacher upgrades in Jefferson and Oldham Counties. Facility Services also secured two new energy savings engineering and service partners and renewed bids for modified bitumen roof systems, bleachers, and spray foam roofing. Additionally, Mark's team is developing an OVEC facilities web site that will highlight research papers on the impact of facilities on learning, green schools, technology, school safety, finance, and more. Negotiated price contracts will be posted on the site, as well as best practices for school facilities, contact information for procured partners, and general facility references. If you have questions about building renovations or maintenance or need guidance about future construction, contact Mark at mryles@ovec.org.



Exceptional Children Services & Pre-ETS 2023-24

Fueling Lives with Good Projects

If you stepped into Hannah Simpson's moderate and severe disabilities (MSD) class in Gallatin County on any given day, you'd find students accomplishing the impossible. This year students made homemade candles and learned other new skills. Their crowning achievement was hosting OVEC's northern region Transition Fair. For weeks, the class planned, shopped, and cooked for the event. Hannah's classroom received American Rescue Plan (ARP) Transition Grant monies, distributed through OVEC, which made these cutting-edge projects possible.

"The ARP Transition Grant allowed us to make huge strides in areas we were behind," says grant coordinator Holli Blevins. "We have been able to provide hundreds of hours of direct coaching and support to teachers and have watched students blossom through classroom projects. The result of the grant has been meaningful work and joyful cooperation at every level."



The northern Transition Fair that Hannah's class hosted was one of three that OVEC Exceptional Child Services (ECS) promoted this year. The fairs offered swag bags loaded with supplies, as well as 26 vendors to help students learn about job and higher ed opportunities, transportation services, Social Security, camps, therapists, residential placements, and more. Cody Clark, a wonderfully engaging magician and motivational speaker encouraged through the years by OVEC ECS consultants as an adult thriving with a disability, entertained the audiences of both the northern and southern fairs as the keynote speaker. Students at the southern fair also enjoyed the Kentucky State Police driving simulator. More than 200 students participated in the three Transition Fairs supported by the ARP grant.

The ARP grant also allowed Holli to mentor a cohort of 48 special education teachers for the first time in OVEC's history. "In our current environment, extra support and guidance is deeply needed. Every district faces issues with not having enough staff, and staff retention is at an all-time low. We were so honored to move special education forward in the OVEC region through this grant," Holli says.

The total number of participants for ECS activities in 2023-24 was 14,467. ECS staff provided 2,335 hours of professional learning to districts, along with 781 hours of consultation and 579 hours of coaching. While these stats are impressive, they only begin to capture the dynamic ways OVEC's ECS and Pre-ETS consultants have fueled lives this year. Our special needs students thrive because of the curriculum, projects, and people OVEC brings to the classroom.



iLEAD Academy 2023-24

Fueling Kentucky's Future with Tech Leaders

When Lizzy Newell gets ready for work each day, she brushes her teeth with a toothpaste and toothbrush supplied by her employer, Proctor & Gamble (P&G). She puts on clean clothes washed with P&G products. P&G owns nearly 80 brands, including Head & Shoulders, Gillette, Venus, Crest, Oral-B, Tide, and Bounty. But how do these products make it to your store shelves? It starts with raw ingredients, packaging, research and product testing—and, something you may not think about every day, data analytics. “P&G wants to use the best ways to get products to consumers. Not just the best in health standards, although that is a priority. But also, the most efficient supply chain that won’t crack under pressure, like many companies had happen in the pandemic. My job is to help improve the quality of P&G vendor DUNS data, a consistent identifier across all vendor records used to facilitate better reporting and data analysis. These improvements will make it easier to aggregate vendor data and provide insights to internal business partners. This will help them make informed business decisions that will drive growth, reduce costs, streamline efficiencies, and mitigate risks. The work I am doing during my summer internship will be applied to day-to-day processes delivering value directly to P&G brands and businesses worldwide,” explains Lizzy.



Lizzy’s job may sound like something an experienced analyst would do. But Lizzy is a rising sophomore from Owen County who attends iLEAD Academy, Kentucky’s first regional public high school that prepares students for high-demand, high-wage jobs in fields like technology, engineering, and the medical field. For several years, iLEAD has been partnering with corporate leaders through the INTERalliance of Greater Cincinnati, including P&G, Kroger, and 5/3 Bank. And this year, two of iLEAD’s high school students landed the competitive internship at P&G, Megan Jones and Lizzy, who says, “I am very honored to have this opportunity at P&G and grateful for the skills I am learning. I am excited to see what paths this will open for me moving forward.”

iLEAD serves students from Carroll, Gallatin, Henry, Owen, and Trimble Counties. With success stories like 113 out of 147 graduates earning associates degrees the past nine years and issuing 73 computer science certifications in the past four years, iLEAD has always prepared students well. “No matter a student’s background, OVEC’s innovative and generous provision of this academy means their opportunities are limitless. Technical and creative jobs are wide open in Kentucky. Students can get halfway to their career during high school. iLEAD increases career exploration and accelerates degree completion—this transforms students’ futures,” explains Alicia Sells, long-time coordinator of iLEAD and OVEC Director of Innovation.

In 2023-24, iLEAD had its highest enrollment to date: 157 total students. Thirty of those students attended online as part of the third-year pilot program for the Rural Tech Grant. This year's focus was on preparing students to be "The Most Qualified Applicant." In addition to student internships at P&G, highlights from this year include the following:

- 106 out of 157 students were concentrators in a pathway, which means the student completed two or more pathway courses.
- 33 passed KYEOP (career-ready end-of-technical-program) exams in electrical engineering, automation engineering, computer programming, business management, and early childhood education.
- Students in welding, computer science, and information technology received mentorships through Future 42, a technical-career program comprised of manufacturers along the U.S. Highway 42 corridor in north-central Kentucky who partner with Jefferson Community and Technical College (JCTC).
- All iLEAD students presented work in their areas of expertise at the Student Showcase held in May at JCTC in Carrollton, Ky. Community and business leaders attended and encouraged their progress.
- Two rising seniors were recognized as HURST Scholars and have earned full-ride to Berea College as juniors: Emma Boes, dual engineering & computer programming student from Henry County, and Melesa Herzet, engineering student from Carroll County.
- The Class of 2024 had 24 graduates, 17 of whom received associate degrees from JCTC and 4 of whom received both associate of arts and associate of science with double majors.
- Alicia Sells has been tapped to expand the statewide virtual computer science academy after a successful pilot program through iLEAD. Alicia will head the We Lead CS (WLCS) Kentucky Virtual Career Academy program, with long-time iLEAD teachers and administrators Jenna Gray serving as WLCS Director of Student Services and Eric Gray as the Director of Virtual Learning. WLCS will have 105 students enrolled virtually this fall from iLEAD Academy, Owen, Lawrence, and Rockcastle Counties, with the goal of 250 the following year. iLEAD will continue its good work with Katie Ashcraft taking the reins as Director.



Teach Tech KY 2023-24

Fueling Classrooms with Innovation

How do you get a sphero robot to travel backward or an animated elf to dance on the screen? With lots of tries! Students in the classrooms of this year's Teach Tech KY cohort learned skills that will serve them life-long. "This is Bullitt County's second year having participants in Teach Tech KY. Some of our students tackled advanced block coding this year. I wasn't sure how they would handle the speed bumps they would encounter. I was surprised with their stamina. When they couldn't get their sprite to do what they wanted, they just shrugged and kept experimenting until they had a breakthrough. The joy and excitement they had when they showed me their success—that's one of those great feel-good teacher moments for me. We've come a long way in a short time with Teach Tech," explains Travis Whitworth, math teacher at Cedar Grove Elementary.

Teach Tech KY, a \$4 million initiative funded with an Education Innovation Research (EIR) grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) administered by OVEC and evaluated by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and BloomBoard, is having success across the region. Intended to help teachers teach math, computer science (CS), and computational thinking skills in our tech-driven age, districts are finding that the program is also increasing student engagement. "With the tools Teach Tech KY provides, students realize math's relevance. When they see its relevance, they also grow in grit and are proud of their progress. This program is a huge win for teachers and students in our region," shares Travis, who was a participant last year but served as a coach this year. He met with the cohort through email, BloomBoard, and Zoom, viewing their lesson plans and artifacts and guiding them on how to effectively approach instruction.

Teach Tech KY provides math teachers with six self-paced online micro-credential units. Teachers also have the benefit of group coaching, curriculum consulting, a stipend to host a Family Engagement Event (FEE) to introduce CS concepts and careers to parents, a \$4,050 award for completing the program, and the opportunity to use that award to complete a rank change. "Students who have exposure to tech education are ahead of the curve," explains Alicia Sells, who served as OVEC Director of Innovation for many years and helped secure the grant. "CS and information technology employment is growing in demand, but Kentucky falls behind in CS teacher preparation programs. This grant is designed to address our need to prepare a strong workforce for tomorrow and help our students become more confident and persistent problem solvers today."

Teach Tech KY benchmarks in the 2023-24 school year:

- 33 math teachers in grades 3-8 have completed the program in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. They represent 10 districts; 6 were OVEC districts: Bullitt, Eminence, Franklin, Henry, Jefferson, and Oldham.
- 43 all-subject teachers in grades 3-12 have signed up for the cohort in 2024-25. They represent 11 districts; 5 are OVEC districts: Bullitt, Eminence, Grant, Oldham, and Spencer. This year will be unlike previous years, focusing on implementation instead of research.
- 100% of completers hosted a FEE with interactive activities and information about CS careers and the benefits of math and computational thinking in their students' lives. Parent feedback was very positive and some participants cited the FEE as one of the best parts of the program.

Head Start 2023-24

Fueling Lives with Good Beginnings

This year, students weren't the only ones who donned their caps and gowns to celebrate graduation at Cedar Grove Head Start. Students and parents shared in the joy of teacher Matthew Howard's completion of his bachelor's degree. "I always dreamed of being a teacher. I would play school as a kid," Matthew says.

Matthew started working for Head Start as a sub when his friend told him about the program. He fell in love with the preschool age group. He worked several years as an assistant before enrolling in college and becoming a lead teacher. It's obvious he's putting what he learned to work: his classroom consistently receives high scores, and in 2022-23 it earned the Highest In-Kind Achievement from OVEC Head Start. His goals don't end with his graduation this year. "I think I will eventually get my master's degree because the education I gain directly improves my classroom," Matthew shares.



OVEC Head Start invests in their teacher work force by providing any employee the underwriting to attend college or pursue a Childhood Development Associate certification with full tuition paid. "We are hoping to invest in our teachers, who, in turn, invest in our children," explains Dr. Erika Nygard, Director of Head Start, new to the position in 2023-24. "We want to build the next generation of educators and it starts with this kind of investment. It's an unbelievable opportunity," Erika says.

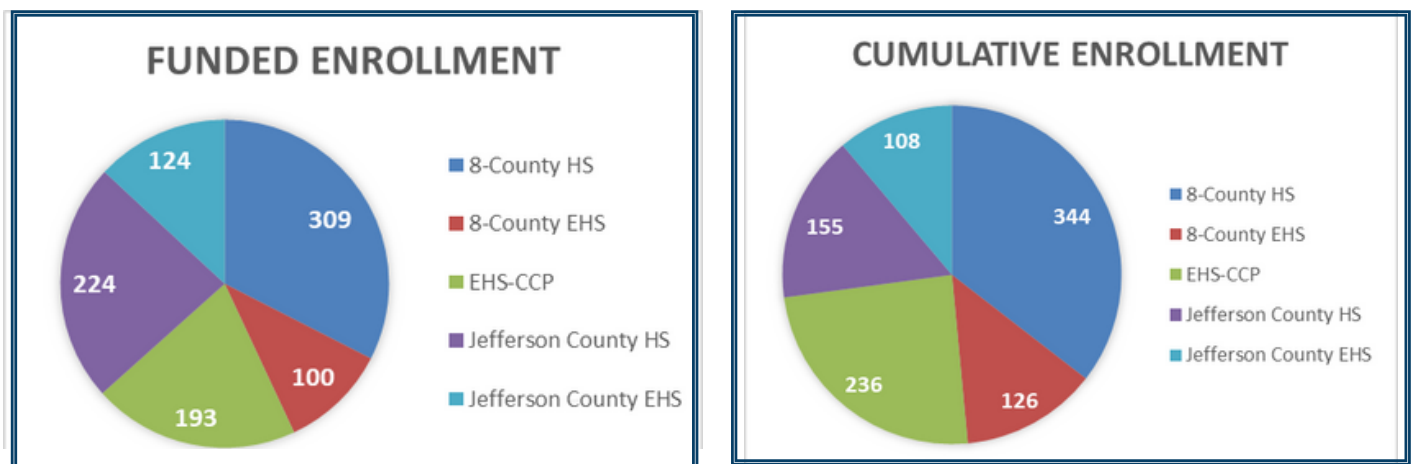
Matthew agrees, "When I found out OVEC covered tuition, it was a game-changer for me. The cost of higher education was no longer a hindrance, but the support was more than financial. OVEC staff answered every question I had about tuition payments and provided encouragement and coaching in the classroom. With OVEC, my career is limitless—and so the way I can impact lives. This is just the beginning."

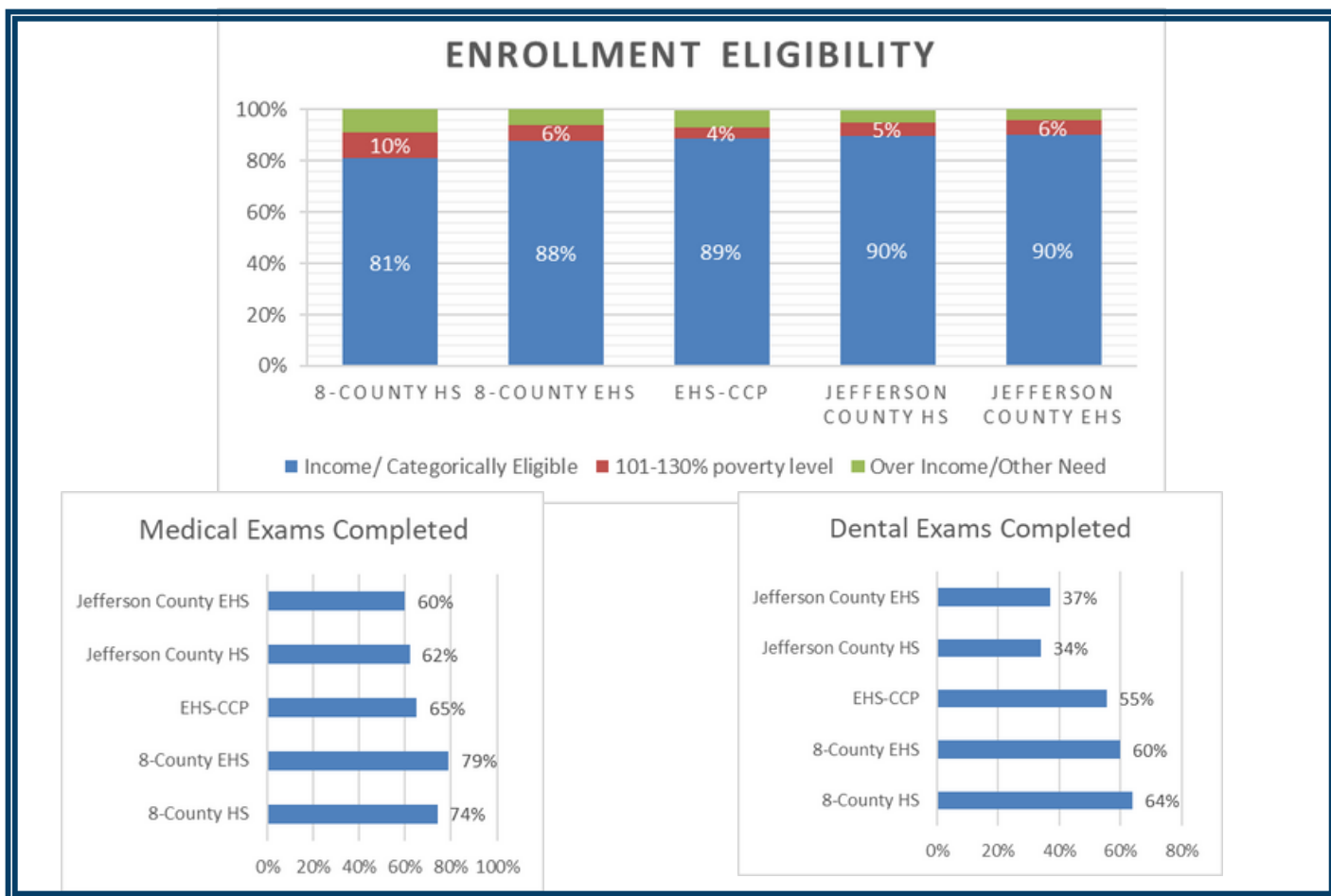
Expanding the Head Start teacher workforce isn't the only achievement of Head Start's hard-working staff this year. Four new sites opened: Newburg Early Head Start in West Buechel, Louisville; Old Mill, in partnership with Bullitt County, a school-year Head Start program; Smoketown, in partnership with Bates Child Development Center, a full-day, full-year EHS and HS (see photos on the next page); and Eminence, an existing program, moved into a new location with extensive renovations. This year's OVEC Head Start Coat Drive, in partnership with donor giving through OVEF, was the biggest in history. OVEC was able to provide a coat to every student who needed one. Students received dental treatment and educational materials to use at home, such as books and family phonics curriculum. As grant and community support grow, so do the lives of our students.

OVEC Head Start/Early Head Start is our original Head Start grant which serves 8 counties – Bullitt, Gallatin, Henry, Oldham, Owen, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble. The annual grant for the 8-County OVEC Head Start/Early Head Start is \$5,666,634. During the 2014-15 school year, OVEC Head Start was chosen as one of the four Kentucky Early Head Start–Child Care Partnership grant recipients. The annual grant for EHS-CCP is \$3,644,669. Two components of that grant are to focus on school readiness for children ages zero to three and improve quality in the childcare facilities with whom we have chosen to work. We currently have childcare partners in Bullitt, Franklin, Jefferson and Owen counties.

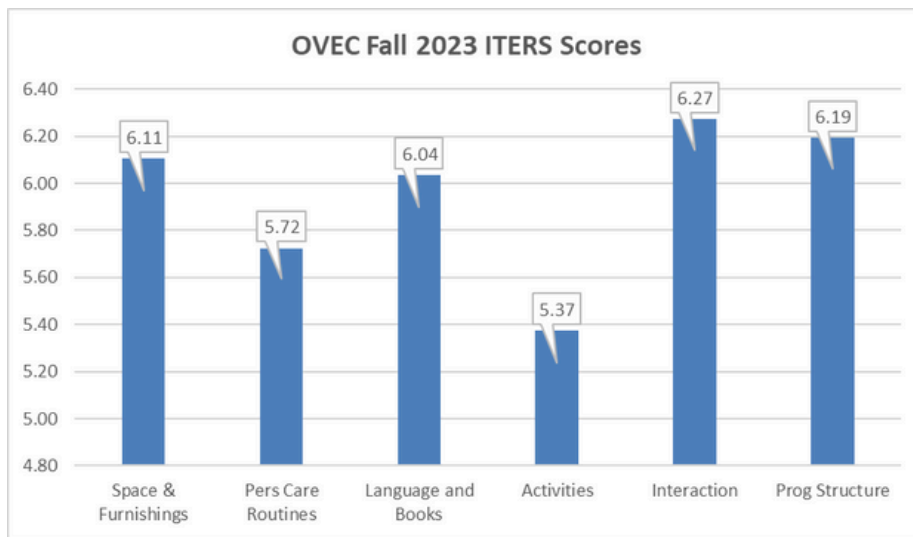
In September of 2019, the Office of Head Start (OHS) notified the Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative (OVEC) of a grant to serve children in Jefferson County through Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The annual grant for Jefferson County Head Start/Early Head Start is \$10,611,741. In addition, OVEC received \$7,562,540 in one-time start-up funding to provide classroom furniture and supplies and to support facility renovations at several sites.

Newburg Early Head Start, located at 1818 Rangeland Rd., opened in September 2023, and Smoketown Head Start/Early Head Start, located at 600 Lampton St., opened in December 2023. These sites are home to 3 Head Start classrooms and 13 Early Head Start classrooms that are fully furnished by brand-new toys and furniture from Lakeshore Learning Company. We are so excited to welcome children and families from the Newburg and Smoketown neighborhoods in Jefferson County!

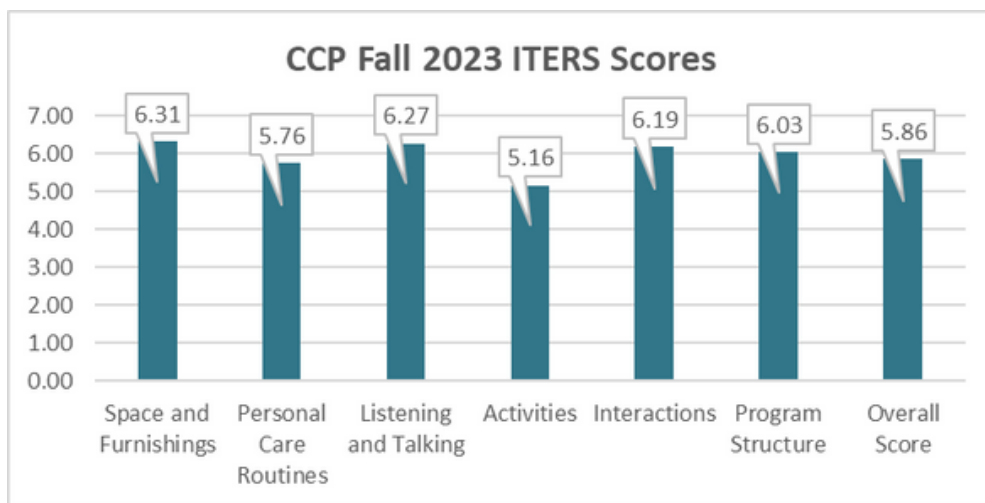




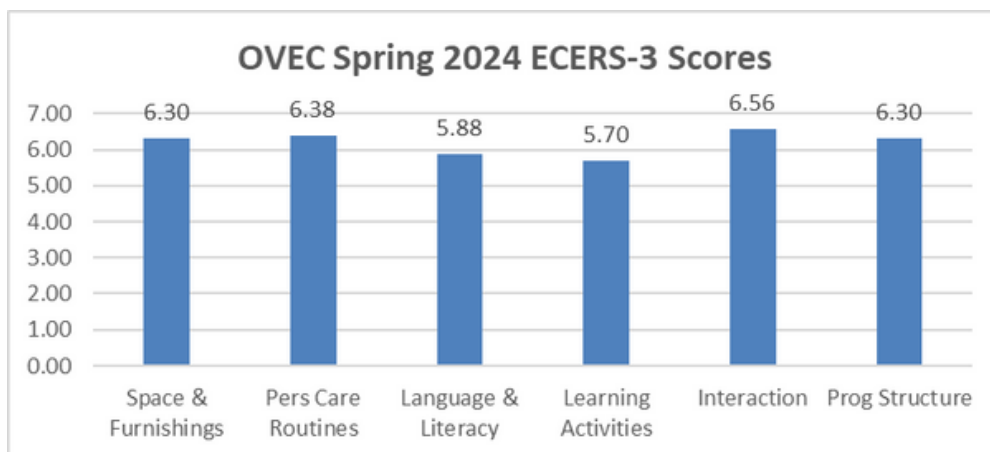
Since 2007, Head Start began to focus on school readiness issues for children ages birth to five. In recent years this focus has become much more intentional with the need for data to demonstrate progress being made by children enrolled in Head Start Programs. In 2012, OVEC Head Start established a School Readiness Leadership team comprised of administrators, teaching staff and parents to develop these goals and to identify the data sources to be used to determine what progress was achieved. The OVEC Head Start/Early Head Start Program Planning Committee (formerly the School Readiness Committee) met 3 times during the past year. The members reviewed data for the 2023-2024 school year including attendance data, family engagement outcomes, self-assessment, In-Kind parent involvement hours, and parent surveys. Data showing limited growth toward long-term program goals was presented and self-assessment action plans have already been put in place to spark future growth. The committee explored upcoming professional learning opportunities that will support both new and veteran staff to increase the progress of children toward the goals. The OVEC Head Start Program Planning Leadership Team reviewed and analyzed the most recent data Teaching Strategies GOLD child outcomes data to determine if their school readiness program goals were met for the year. It was determined that progress had been made and new school readiness goals for 24-25 were established.



Using the ITERS-3 Observation Tools with a scale of 1-7 for evaluating classroom environments, our EHS classrooms all scored above the minimum threshold of 5 in all 6 areas. Child Development Specialists work to provide solutions for issues identified through our observations.

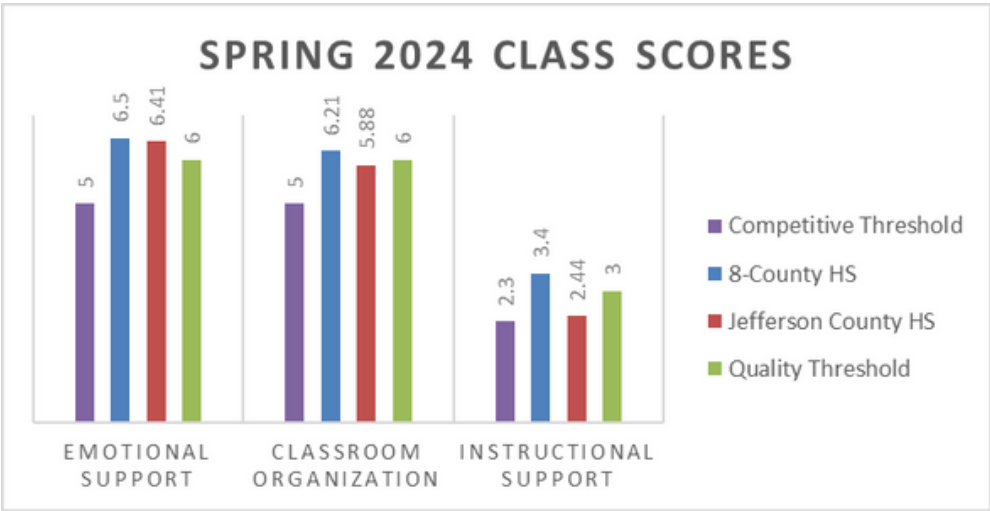


Using the ITERS-3 Observation Tools with a scale of 1-7 for evaluating classroom environments, ALL CCP sites had overall observation scores above the minimum threshold of 5. Quality Mentors work to provide solutions for issues identified through our observations.



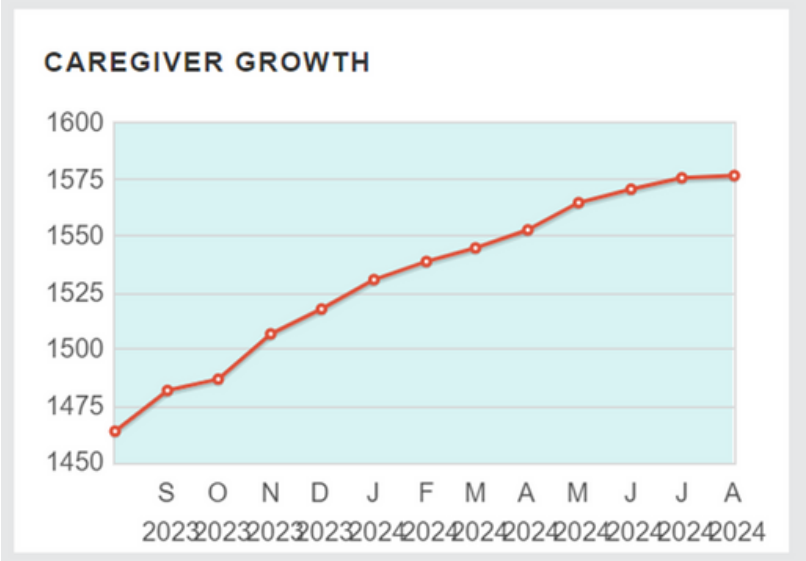
The ECERS-3 was used to survey HS Classrooms this year. ALL observed Head Start classrooms had overall observation scores above the minimum threshold of 5. Child Development Specialists work to provide solutions for issues identified through our observations.

The classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) is completed on ALL Head Start classrooms annually. The CLASS® tool has 10 dimensions of teacher-child interactions rated on a 7-point scale, from low to high. The 10 CLASS® dimensions are organized into three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.” See graph below for OVEC Head Start’s Spring 2024 CLASS scores.



Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is also a critical component to school readiness. A multitude of home-to-school activities are sent home each year by classroom teachers hoping to reinforce skills/concepts focused on during instructional time and bolster the belief that the parent is the child’s primary educator. Additionally, at least three family involvement activities are conducted yearly, and parent feedback on program quality and effectiveness is collected annually. All of these factors encourage and support positive communications/relationships with the families served. One of the long-term goals of the EHS/HS program was to “Increase families’ understanding of the importance of School Readiness”. Building on the knowledge that parents are a child’s first and most important teachers, OVEC introduced ReadyRosie, an early education family engagement tool, to share school readiness activities with parents in enjoyable and meaningful ways. This online family engagement tool was instrumental in helping parents expand on the teachers’ Creative Curriculum lessons using short home parent-child activities. The graph below illustrates the increase in parents using ReadyRosie in the past year.



A Miracle in the Making: *Head Start Coat Drive*

Thanks to generous donors to OVEC's Head Start (HS) Coat Drive, every HS student who needed a winter coat got one! One hundred fifty coats, 150 hats, and 100 pairs of gloves were gifted to HS students. Donations were provided through Eminence FRC, Nucor, and The Bufford Family Foundation.

These coats represent more than the warmth they provide. They symbolize the layers of support families receive through HS. "When we look at what a coat means to a family, it is much more than a coat," explains Rachael Noyes, Family Engagement Specialist for Jefferson County Head Start. "The money that would have been used for the coat can go for the family's electric bill, rent, groceries, transportation, or diapers. Every day we hear from families struggling to make ends meet. To not have to worry about an extra expense like a winter coat helps these families."

Jasmine Exum, OVEC Family Engagement Specialist, adds, "It seems like such a small thing, but when a family is living in survival mode or has been repeatedly let down by those they have asked for help in the past, learning to trust can be difficult. When we begin to work with families, being able to provide something like a coat goes a long way to help them see we are cheering them on."



Rachael explains that the whole child and whole family approach HS uses is what sets HS apart from other programs. "The majority of our families are facing financial hardships, trauma, lack of family support, and overall stress, all negative impacts on family well-being and child development. When OVEC HS can step in with TARC passes, meals, budgeting, and health referrals, it helps families with real needs, but it also brings hope and help that they wouldn't otherwise receive," she explains.

Jasmine agrees, "We don't just teach our students. We are committed to teaching their parents, as well, and this leads to more stability and less stress in their lives. Administrators, Family Engagement Specialists, and teachers spend hours finding resources to meet each family's needs—from transportation to child care assistance to employment search support—and, thanks to our community, winter coats!"

Twenty-five dollars is the average cost of providing a winter coat, hat, and gloves to a child in the HS program. This helps them comfortably wait for their bus or enjoy playing outside. To donate to this year's coat drive, you can give through the Ohio Valley Educational Foundation (OVEF).

Dart for Head Start 5K Run & Walk



Our first-ever Ohio Valley Educational Foundation (OVEF) Dart for Head Start 5K Run & Walk exceeded all expectations! Blessed with a perfect Saturday morning in June 2024, more than 100 runners, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters rallied together to raise nearly \$5,000 for Head Start. The funds will be used for art supplies, coats, books, and more for HS students and classrooms. Congratulations to our racers for crossing the finish line! Your determination reminded us to keep pushing for our students' success.



Grants Development

The chart below lists significant grants OVEC has received since the last Annual Report, totaling \$22,575,793. The year of implementation for the funds received is shown in parentheses. Additionally, OVEC administers the ongoing School-Based Mental Health (2023-27) and R.C. Durr Data Science Career (2023-25) grants.

Project Title	Funding Source	Amount Rec'd
Jefferson County Head Start/Early Head Start (2024)	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	\$10,804,368
Eight-County Head Start/Early Head Start (2023-24)	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	\$6,268,471
Early Head Start - Child Care Partnerships (2023-24)	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	\$4,229,502
Exceptional Children Services (2024-25)	Kentucky Department of Education	\$1,006,103
Community Early Childhood Regional Collaboratives (2024-26)	Kentucky Governor's Office of Early Childhood	\$216,300
Pre-Employment Transition Services Accessible Van	WHAS Crusade for Children	\$35,000
iLEAD Academy STEM Lab	Dow Chemical	\$8,549
iLEAD Academy STEM Lab	LG&E and KU	\$1,000
Head Start Coat Drive	Bufford Family Foundation	\$5,000
Head Start Coat Drive	Republic Conduit/Nucor	\$1,500



Ohio Valley Educational Foundation

In 2023-24, OVEF received \$32,651 in contributions for OVEC programs from 138 individuals and organizations.

OVEF donors, you make an immeasurable impact on Kentucky's youngest learners.

Watch for Ways to Give

- Dart for Head Start 5K
- Give for Good Louisville
- Giving Tuesday
- Kentucky Gives Day

Success Stories

- Improved social media engagement
- More than \$5,000 raised at Dart for Head Start 5K!
- Coats and supplies provided to OVEC & Jefferson County HS & EHS programs