

# Welcome

Wausau School District  
4-year-old kindergarten  
Overview & FAQ

Task Force - July 10, 2024  
Presented by: Kara Rakowski, 4K  
Principal & Early Childhood Coordinator

“Early Childhood education is essential in preparing all children to be constant learners – this sets the tone for success in all aspects of future life.”

# Overview – key questions

Why is 4K important?

What is high quality early childhood programming?

What components are necessary to achieve and maintain high level of quality?

What has 4K looked like in Wausau over the years?

What is the current 4K & EC structure & enrollment numbers?

“A child’s life is like a piece of paper on which every person leaves a mark.”

# Why 4K?

Four-year-old kindergarten (4K) provides all young children with the opportunity to participate in a quality early learning program that provides a solid foundation for lifelong learning. Children build social and pre-academic skills that contribute to future success in school.

# Benefits of 4K

- Guarantee of a Department of Public Instruction (DPI) licensed teacher
- A curriculum that addresses the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards for preschool children
- Opportunities for early identification of potential learning needs and intervention
- Expanded parent involvement and training opportunities
- Additional resources to maintain and build quality early learning programming

# Importance of early childhood/ preschool education

## Foundation of Lifelong Learning

- Early Childhood Education sets the groundwork for future academic and social success

## Critical Developmental Stage

- Ages 3-5 are crucial for cognitive, emotional, and social development

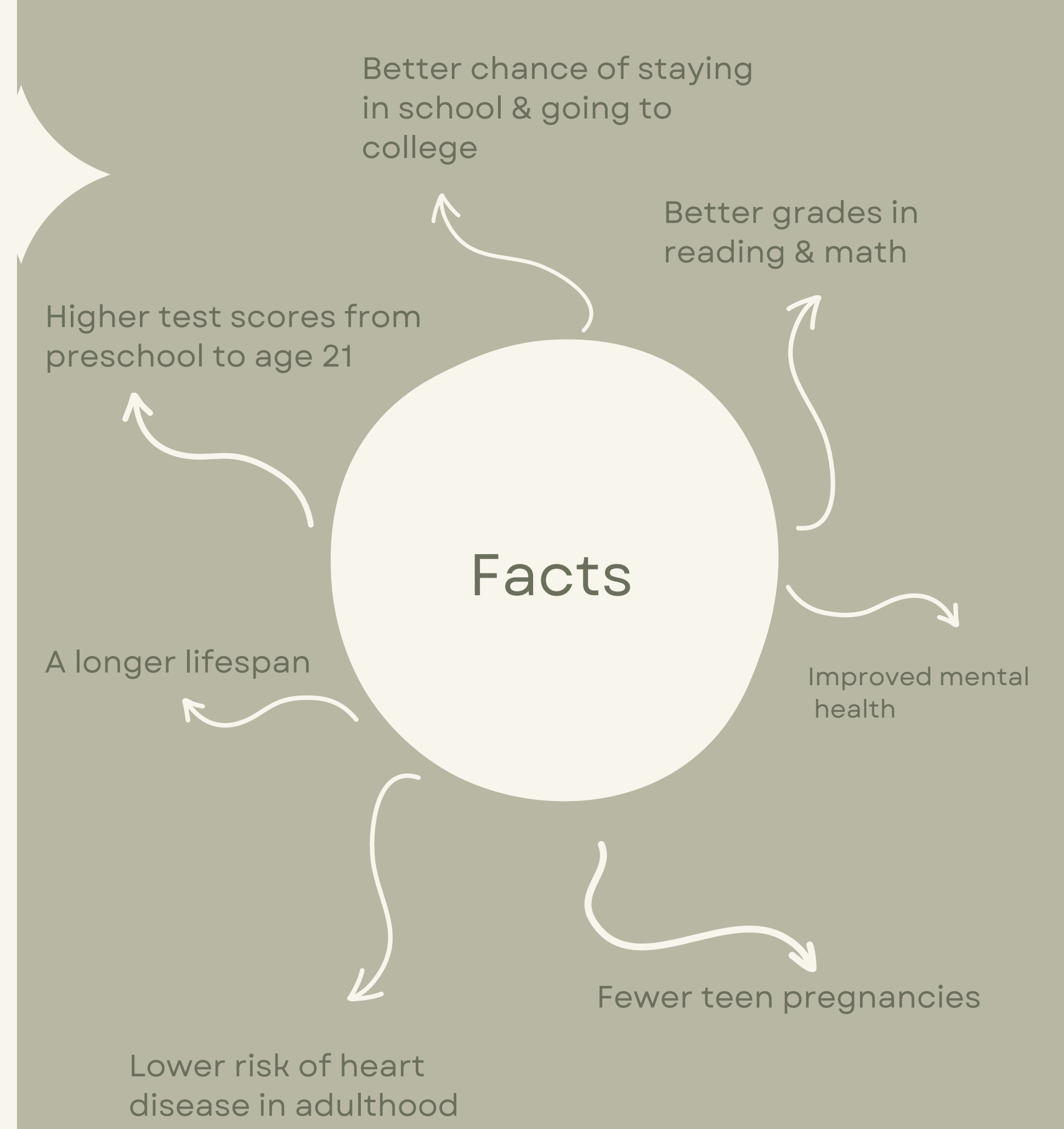
## Achievement Gap Reduction

- Quality pre-k programs can help close the achievement gap

# Bigger thoughts

Studies show that supporting children's early learning can lead to:

(Source: NIH)



# What is high-quality early childhood programming?

Components of high quality early childhood programming (SOURCE: NAEYC)

**Interpersonal interactions** - A well-trained and highly skilled teacher tailors their interactions to fit the needs of the child using responsive language, engages all children in classroom activities, fosters independence, and creates a language-rich environment. (TEACHER)

**Physical environment** - Children need a physical setting—both inside and outdoors—where they can play, explore, and learn safely. (ENVIRONMENT)

**Program support structure** - Programs need effective leaders who can provide instructional support to teachers as well as sound business management to the overall program. (LEADERSHIP)

# What components are necessary to achieve and maintain high levels of quality?

**Teachers trained in early childhood education** - All teachers need to have a foundational knowledge of child development and be able to lead activities that promote children's learning at various ages.

**Effective leadership** - Programs need instructional leaders with a solid understanding of early child development, and teaching and learning strategies specific to early brain development.

**Age appropriate curriculum** - All early childhood programs should adopt a research-based curriculum that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically relevant for all children.



# What components are necessary to achieve and maintain high levels of quality?

**Comprehensive family engagement activities** - Programs need to develop family engagement strategies that encourage families to participate in their child's learning and promote two-way communication, enabling parents to share with teachers the unique strengths and talents of their child.

**Multilevel continuous quality improvement system** - It is important that structures are in place to assess the overall program, individual classrooms, and employees, using data to inform positive and proactive improvements.

# What has 4K looked like in WSD over the years?

**2000–2004** – charter school at AC Kiefer

**2001–2002** - community site 4K programming

**2010** - Pyramid Model Implementation Site

**October 2013** - Recognized at state level for Pyramid Model/SEFEL practices

**2012–2013** - Facilities Utilization Task Force analyzed options for early learning in anticipation of closing AC Kiefer.

**Project goal:** Investigate and determine best options based on research, best practice, program/district/state values, and key interests for the WSD 4K and Early Childhood Program

# 4K/EC history

**January 2013** - Early learning focused Facilities Utilization Task Force presented options for 4K programming

**November 2014** - Referendum passed to build four 4K academies onto existing elementary buildings

**November 2014–August 2016** - Design and build phases for 4K academies

**August 2016–present:** 4K located in 4K academies at GD Jones, Thomas Jefferson, Hawthorn Hills, and Riverview. Program also continued at Community Partner Sites

# What is required by DPI for 4K?

## 4-year-old kindergarten - DPI lens

### **Students:**

- Age 4 years on or before September 1
- 4-year-old kindergarten is optional
- 4K is open to everyone who is eligible

### **Teachers:**

- DPI certified teachers
- Program wide professional development
- Design instruction using district provided curriculum and curricular resources

# Wisconsin State Statute - 4-year-old kindergarten Act 48

**SECTION 1. 121.004 (7) (cm)** of the statutes is created to read:

121.004 (7) (cm) A pupil enrolled in a 4-year-old kindergarten program that provides the required number of hours of direct pupil instruction under s. 121.02 (1) (f) 2 shall be counted as 0.6 pupil if the program annually provides at least 87.5 additional hours of outreach activities.

**SECTION 2. 121.02 (1) (f) 2** of the statutes is amended to read:

121.02 (1) (f) 2. Annually, schedule at least 437 hours of direct pupil instruction in kindergarten, at least 1,050 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 1 to 6 and at least 1,137 hours of direct pupil instruction in grades 7 to 12. Scheduled hours under this subdivision include recess and time for pupils to transfer between classes but do not include the lunch period. A school board operating a 4-year-old kindergarten program may use up to 87.5 of the scheduled hours for outreach activities.

Where is 4K currently?

Program options for 4 year olds -  
Wausau School District

4K Academies	4K Community Sites	Charter School 4K
GD Jones	MountainView Montessori	Red Granite
Hawthorn Hills	St. Michael	Wausau Area Montessori
Riverview	Wausau Child Care	
Thomas Jefferson	Woodson YMCA	

# What is the enrollment in 4K?

## 4K demographics - Wausau School District

**1**

### **Enrollment 11/2023**

**Total enrollment: 397**

**4K Academies: 285**

**Community sites: 112**

**2**

### **Enrollment 5/28/2024**

**Total enrollment: 404**

**4K Academies: 289**

**Community sites: 115**

**3**

### **Enrollment 6/27/24**

**Total enrollment: 330**

**4K Academies: 215 (14 ML)**

**Community sites: 81**

**Charter 4K: 28**

**Uncertain: 6**



# Numbers as of 5/28/2024

Number of students per site:

Site Name:	AM Students:	PM Students:	Total Students:
Jones	60	38	98
Hawthorn	15	17	32
Riverview	33	29	62
Jefferson	50	47	97
			Total = 289
MVM	16	17	33
WCC	10	10	20
St. Mike's	13	9	22
YMCA	27	13	40
			Total = 115
Total	224	180	404



# 4K by the numbers - Academies

School:	AM Session:	PM Session:	Total:
GD Jones	54	30 (8 ML)	76
Hawthorn Hills	16	9	25
Riverview	35	13	48
Thomas Jefferson	48	24 (6 ML)	68
Total	153	62 (76)	215

“The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to.”  
~ Marian Wright Edelman

# 4K by the numbers - Community Sites

SCHOOL	AM	PM	TOTAL
St. Mike's	13	11	24
Mountian View Montessori	15	3	18
Wausau Child Care	9	2	11
Woodson YMCA	24	4	28
Total:	61	20	81

# 4K by the numbers - Charter 4K

School	AM session	PM session	Total
Red Granite Charter			22
Wausau Area Montessori Charter	6	n/a	6
Undecided			6

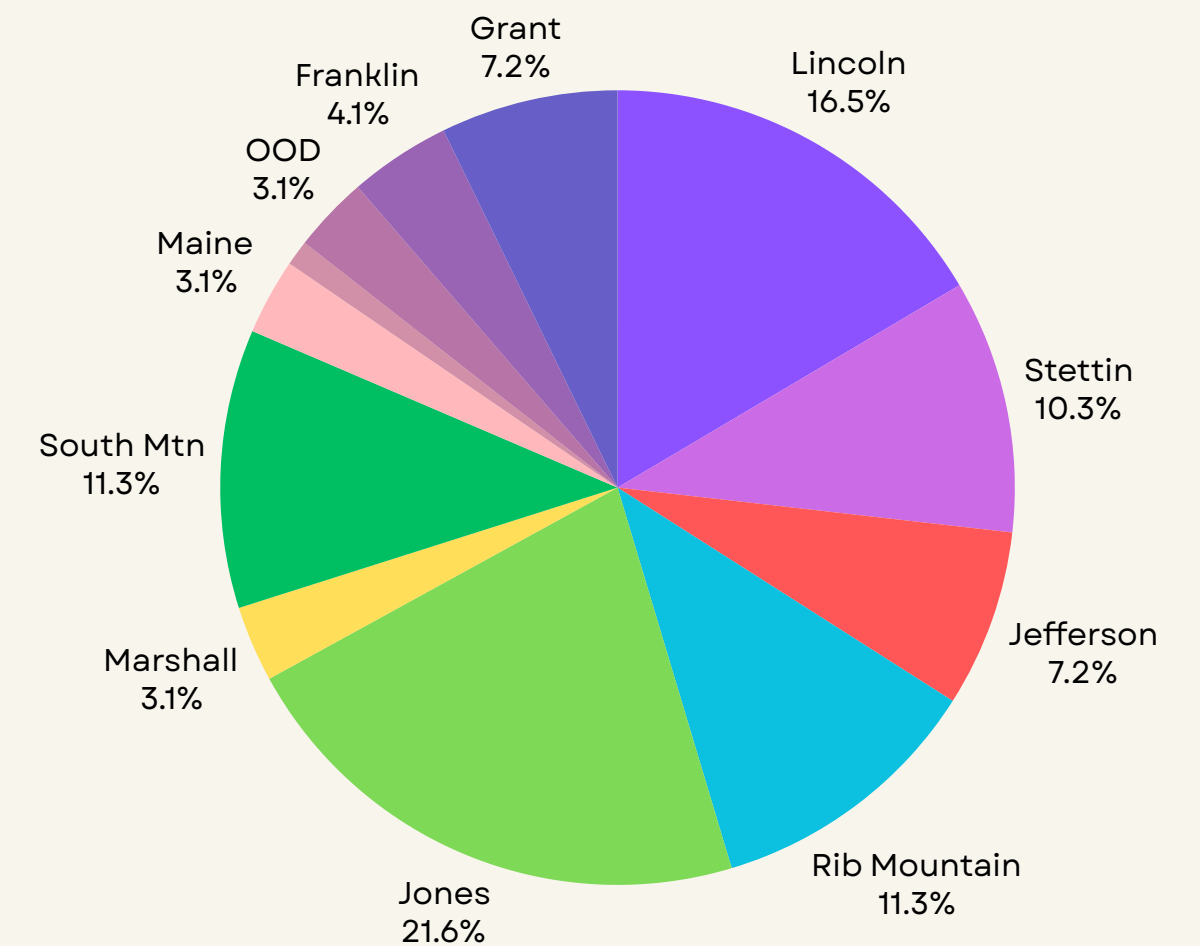
# Community Site numbers across the years

Year	Number of students
2024-2025	81
2023 - 2024	112
2022 - 2023	126
2021 - 2022	122
2020 - 2021	143
2019 - 2020	149
2018 - 2019	149
2017 - 2018	147
2016 - 2017	160

# GD Jones

- 97 students
- 22 students receive Special Education services
- 53 students use transportation services
- 12 all-day Multilingual (ML) students
- 4 - 4K classrooms
- 7 sections of 4K
- 1 EC special ed classroom

Lincoln: 16  
Stettin: 10  
Jefferson: 7  
Rib Mtn: 11  
Jones: 21  
Marshall: 3  
South Mtn: 11  
OOD: 3  
Grant: 7  
Franklin: 4  
Hawthorn: 1  
Maine: 3

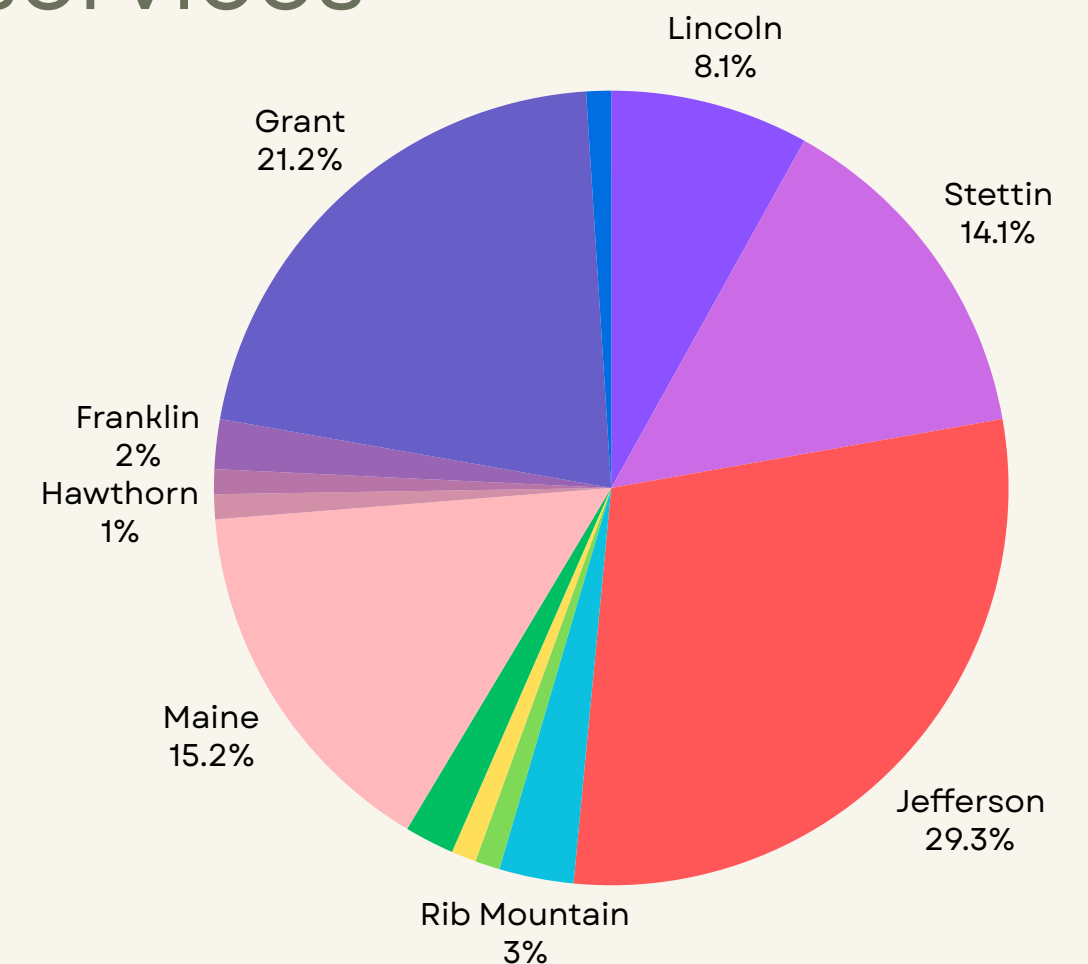


Numbers as of 11/17/23

# Thomas Jefferson

- 99 students
- 9 students receive Special Education services
- 66 students use transportation services
- 9 all-day ML students (Spanish)
- 3 - 4K classrooms
- 6 sections of 4K
- 1 - ELL/4K classroom

Lincoln: 8  
Stettin: 14  
Jefferson: 29  
Rib Mtn: 3  
Jones: 1  
Marshall: 1  
South: 2  
Maine: 15  
Hawthorn: 1  
OOD: 1  
Franklin: 2  
Grant: 21  
Riverview: 1

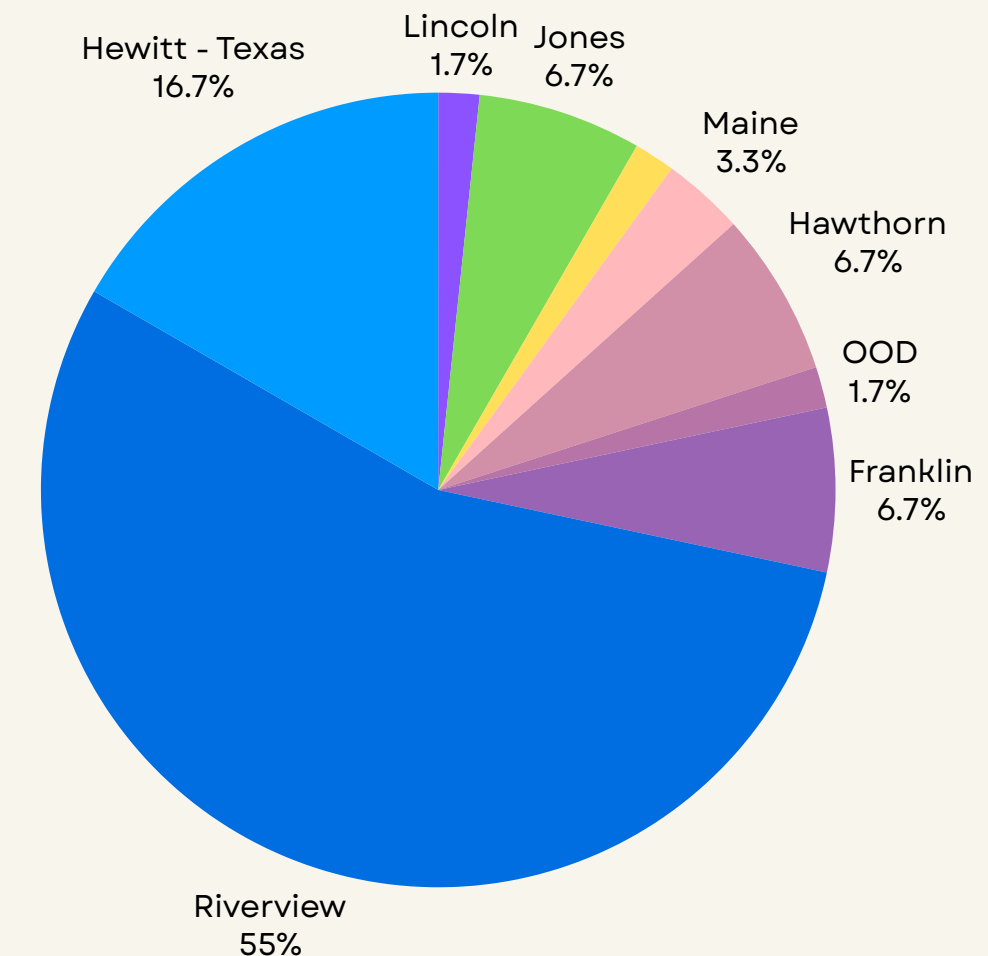


Numbers as of 11/17/23

# Riverview

- 60 students
- 15 students receive Special Education services
- 38 students use transportation services (2 DHH)
- 2 - 4K classrooms
- 4 sections of 4K
- 1 EC special ed classroom

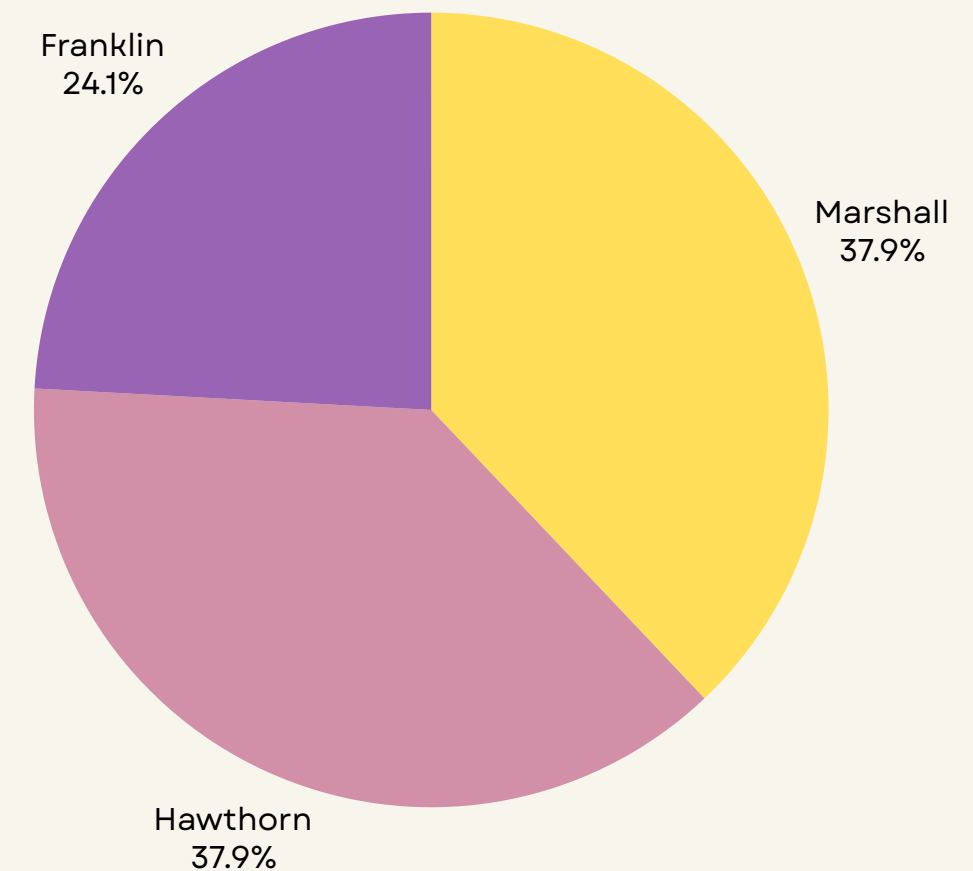
Lincoln: 1  
Jones: 4  
Marshall: 1  
Hawthorn: 4  
Hewitt - Texas: 10  
Riverview: 33  
Franklin: 4  
Maine: 2  
OOD: 1



Numbers as of 11/17/23

# Hawthorn Hills

- 29 students
- 3 students receive Special Education services
- 20 students use transportation
- 1 - 4K classroom
- 1 EC special ed classroom



Franklin: 7  
Hawthorn: 11  
Marshall: 11

Numbers as of 11/17/23



# 4K numbers if we were in 4k-5 buildings

SCHOOL:	AM	PM	TOTAL	Sections
Jones	24	10	34	2
Lincoln	10	15	25	2
South Mtn	6	7	13	1
Rib Mtn	8	6	14	1
Stettin	16	8	24	2
Maine	12	8	20	2
Thomas Jefferson	20	16	36	2
Grant	17	11	28	2

\*Numbers are  
based off 11/2023  
enrollment at the  
academies.

# 4K numbers if we were in 4K - 5 buildings

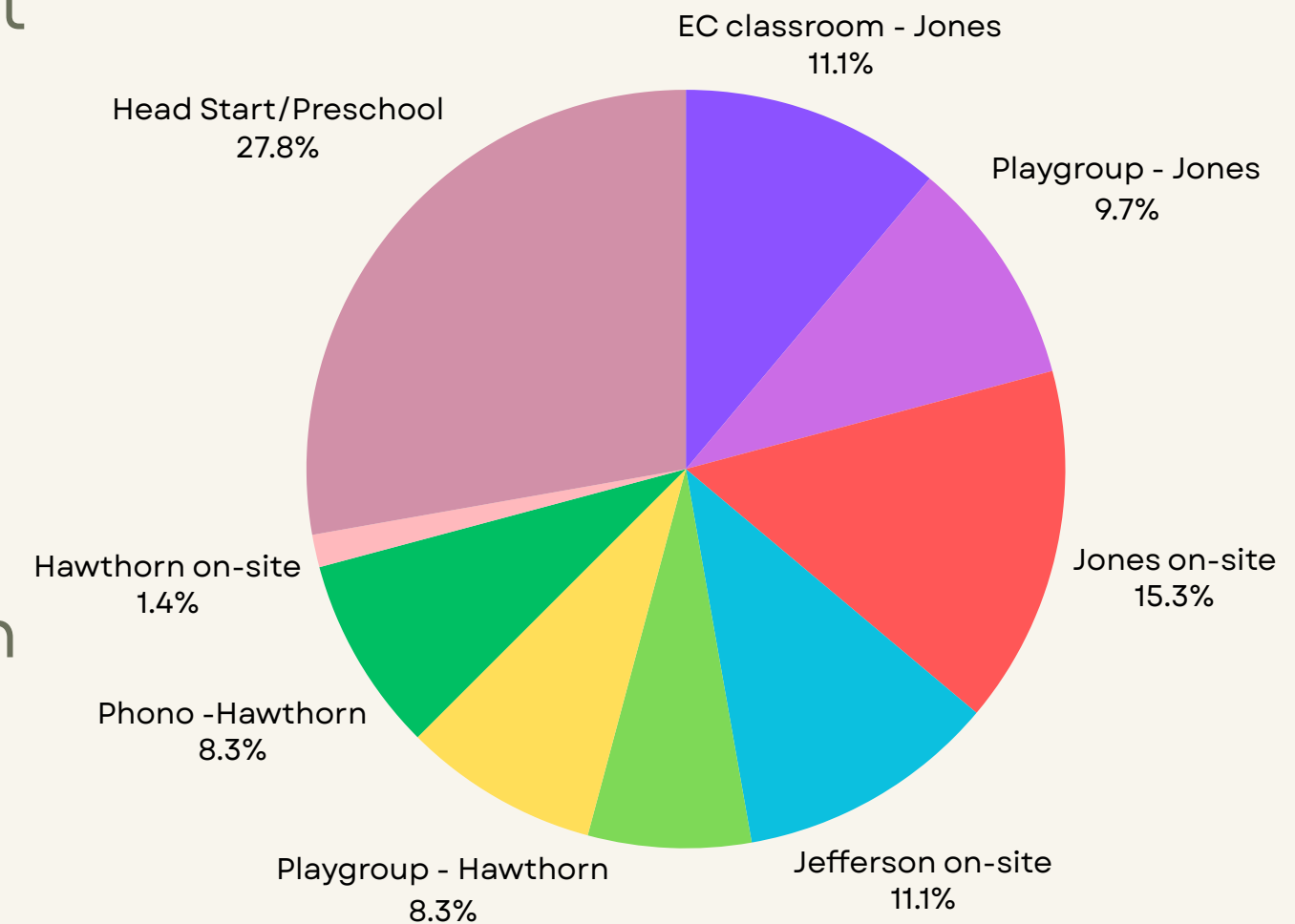
SCHOOL:	AM	PM	TOTAL	Sections
Riverview	24	10	34	2
Hewitt-Texas	3	7	10	1
Hawthorn Hills	6	11	17	1
Franklin	12	5	17	1
John Marshall	7	9	16	1
Out of District	3	2	5	

“Play is our brain’s favorite way  
of learning.” ~ Diane Ackerman

\*Numbers are  
based off 11/23  
enrollment at the  
academies.

# Early Childhood

- 72 students receive early childhood services in our district
- E2: 2 students
- E3: 56 students
- E4: 14 students
- 8 EC students in EC classroom - GD Jones
- 7 EC students in Playgroup - GD Jones
- 11 EC students receive on-site services - GD Jones
- 8 EC students receive on-site services - Thomas Jefferson
- 5 EC students in EC classroom - Riverview
- 6 EC students in Playgroup - Hawthorn Hills
- 6 EC students in Phono Group - Hawthorn Hills
- 1 EC student receives on-site services - Hawthorn
- 20 EC students receive services - Child Care Center or Head Start



“Early childhood classroom teachers are a significant and important source of support and protection for young children.”

~ Karen Peterson, PhD

Numbers as of 11/17/23

School:	EC enrollment:
GD Jones	7
Lincoln	9
Grant	6
Jefferson	5
Maine	5
Stettin	3
Rib Mtn	9
South	7
Total:	51

School:	EC enrollment:
Franklin	2
Riverview	6
Hewitt - Texas	1
Hawthorn Hills	5
John Marshall	7
Total:	21

EC by the numbers in our home schools.

# Early Childhood

## GD Jones:

- 2 Early Childhood classrooms
- 1 OT/PT room
- on-site speech and language
- Play Group

## Jefferson:

- 1 OT/PT room
- on-site speech and language
- Itinerant EC sped support in 4K

## Hawthorn:

- 1 Early Childhood classroom - 3 year olds
- 1 OT/PT room
- on-site speech and language
- Phono class
- Play Group
- Itinerant EC sped support in 4K

## Riverview:

- 2 Early Childhood classrooms
- 1 OT/PT room
- on-site speech and language
- Deaf and hard of hearing services

	Early Learning Centers	Community-Based Preschool Programs	Single Classrooms in Elementary Schools
Advantages	<p><b>Curriculum focus:</b> designed with structured educational programs tailored to early childhood development</p> <p><b>Dedicated Facilities:</b> Environment designed that supports learning and socialization of preschoolers</p> <p><b>Qualified staff:</b> staffed with early childhood educators trained in early childhood development.</p>	<p><b>Flexibility:</b> Offer extended hours and wrap around care to accommodate working parents.</p> <p><b>Cost effective:</b> Can be more cost-effective compared to hiring teachers</p>	<p><b>Integration:</b> transition to formal schooling environment at kindergarten</p> <p><b>Resource sharing:</b> Access to school facilities and resources like playgrounds for many years.</p> <p><b>Community connection:</b> Builds familiarity with future school community.</p>
Challenges	<p><b>Cost:</b> Can have higher initial cost due to specialized facilities and trained staff</p> <p><b>Accessibility:</b> location might restrict access for some families</p>	<p><b>Quality control:</b> varying standards of care and educational quality</p> <p><b>Staff qualifications:</b> mixed levels of training and experience among caregivers</p> <p><b>Staff turn-over:</b> higher rate of staff turn over</p>	<p><b>Curriculum Alignment:</b> May not always align with early childhood educational needs</p> <p><b>Space Constraints:</b> Availability of suitable space within the school may vary.</p> <p><b>Staff logistics:</b> Single sections would result in staff traveling across locations. Would result in increased number of teachers to staff both for 4K &amp; EC special ed.</p>
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Studies indicate that early learning centers often show higher academic readiness due to structured educational programs focused on early literacy, numeracy, and social skills.</li> <li>Enhanced social-emotional development attributed to structured peer interactions and activities designed to foster emotional intelligence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed findings; educational outcomes depend on caregiver training and program structure.</li> <li>Social-emotional development benefits from diverse peer interactions but can vary based on caregiver-child ratios and program quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic readiness may vary; integration into formal school environment can influence early familiarity with school routines.</li> <li>Social-emotional impact from exposure to older peers.</li> </ul>

# Questions or comments

**“WE SEE HOW EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES  
ARE SO IMPORTANT TO  
LIFELONG OUTCOMES,  
HOW THE EARLY  
ENVIRONMENT LITERALLY  
BECOMES EMBEDDED IN  
THE BRAIN AND CHANGES  
ITS ARCHITECTURE.”**

**-- Andrew S. Garner**



# Thank you

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- “The period from birth to eight years old is one of remarkable brain development for children and represents a crucial window of opportunity for education. When children are healthy, safe, and learning well in their early years, they are better able to reach their full developmental potential as adults and participate effectively in economic, social, and civic life. Providing Early Childhood Care and Education is regarded as a means of promoting equity and social justice, inclusive economic growth, and advancing sustainable development.”  
(Sources: [unesco](#), [Why early childhood matters](#))