

## Pima Early Education Program (PEEPs)

**Project Identification Number: PC10. EC# 2.11 Healthy Childhood Environments: Child Care**

**Allocation Amount: \$30,200,000.00 | Spent-to-date: \$10,189,996.22**

### Purpose

The purpose of PEEPs is to increase the number of eligible 3–5-year-old children attending evidence-based high-quality preschools. The focus is on serving children from economically disadvantaged families, with income at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level, as well as minority and dual language learners. This program supports parents returning to work and provides children with the care and education they need to overcome educational disparities exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Key Performance Indicators

Staff track and report on the number of children receiving a PEEPs scholarship and the number of schools and classrooms with at least one PEEPs enrolled student. Staff also collect demographic data, including dual language learners, from participating Head Start extended day preschools and from public school district expansion classrooms.

### Status

In School Year 2023 (SY23), PEEPs served more than 1.6 times the number served in 2022 (1,356 vs. 846) and the number of participating preschool sites increased from 174 to 187 a 7% increase.

Table 1, below, presents the information of types of preschools funded by PEEPs and the number of students served in Pima County for SY23.

### Parent Testimony

**When asked about benefits of PEEPs, parents said, “For my child to learn to speak English / follow a routine,” “the interaction with other children,” and “their development of motor and language skills.”**

**Table 1 – Types of Programming Funded by PEEPs and Number of Students Served**

Type	Number of preschools	Total number of students served
Scholarships	149	687
Head Start Extended Day	10	187
School District Expansion	28	482
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>1,356</b>

There are four types of preschool operators supported by PEEPs: private preschool centers (48% of total), public school district preschool classrooms (34%), preschools in private residences (including group homes) (12%), and Head Start classrooms (6%). These preschools serve the six jurisdictions of Pima County namely the Town of Marana, Town of Oro Valley, Town of Sahuarita, City of South Tucson, City of Tucson, and Unincorporated Pima County.

### Ratings

A primary objective of PEEPs is to promote and expand high quality preschool experiences for all children. Recent studies continue to show how important “quality” is in maximizing the benefits of early childhood education. PEEPs has adopted the Quality First model rating system from the State of Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board, d.b.a. *First Things First*, which is Arizona’s statewide tax-funded early childhood agency focusing on children’s first five years. The number of Pima County PEEPs preschool providers recognized as high quality has increased, from 153 at the beginning of SY23, to 169 at the end of SY23.

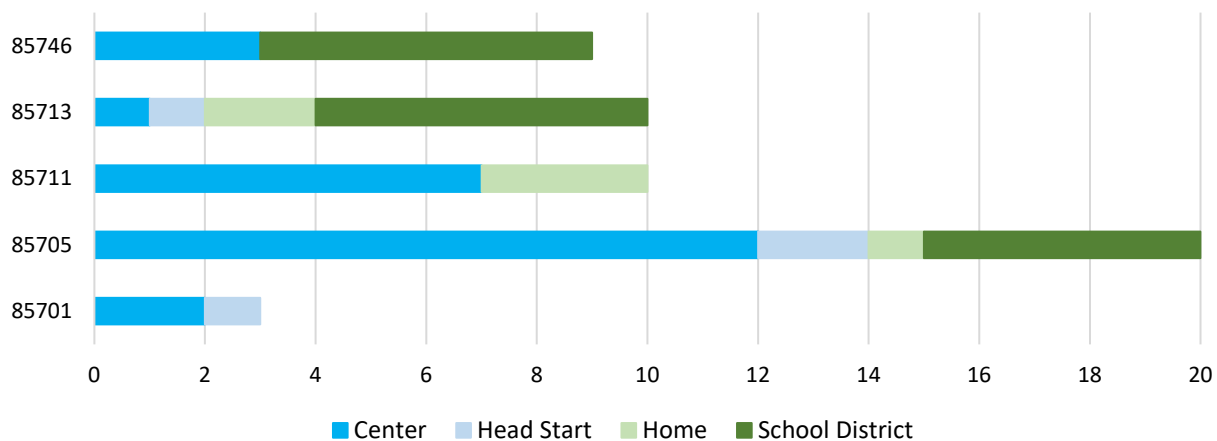
### PEEPs Parent Testimony

*“Preschool helped me return back to the university to help me achieve my degree.”*

*“Helping my son in the program helped me go back to school to further my career.”*

The graphic below (Graph 1) illustrates the number of providers of each type, by location in the five highest-poverty zip codes in Pima County. Poverty rates in these five zip codes areas range from 38.3% to 50.5%.<sup>12</sup> Of the 187 total PEEPs preschools, 52 are in these highest-poverty zip codes.

**Graph 1 – SY23 Number and Type of Providers by High-Poverty Zip Code in Pima County**



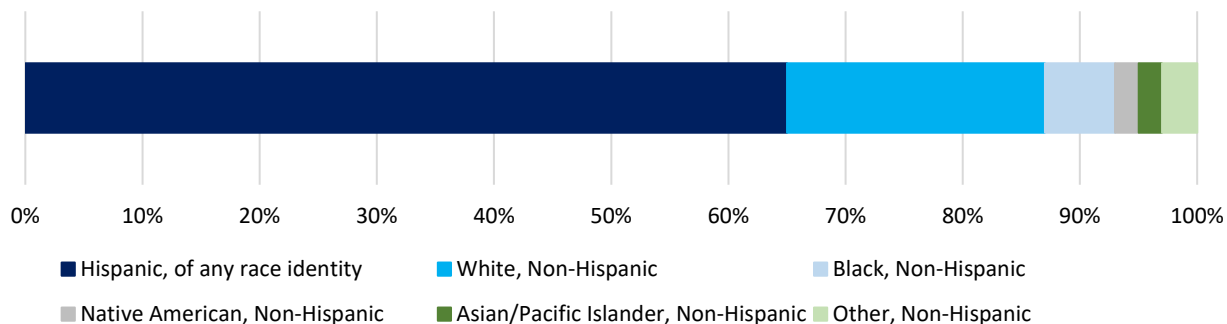
### **Demographics**

Districts with PEEPs supported expansion classrooms and Head Start sites with PEEPs supported extended hours of operation report on the race/ethnicity of children served. Demographic data was collected on 330 of 846 students (39%) in 2022 and 635 of 1,356 students (47%) in 2023. In both years students identified as belonging to a racial or ethnic minority accounted for 78% of the total group with 69% and 65% respectively identified as Hispanic of any race. All PEEPs enrolled students’ households earn less than 300% the federal poverty level for family size (FPL) and many earn less than 200% FPL. Additionally, CWD PEEPs staff tracks the number of PEEPs students recognized as dual language learners. In 2022, 68 of 330 students were recognized as dual language learners and in 2023 that number jumped to 117 of 635.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, [S1701 Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months 2021: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables \(data.census.gov\)](https://data.census.gov).

Graph 2, below, presents the demographic information of children enrolled in school expansion classes and extended Head Start Program in Pima County for SY23.

**Graph 2 – Demographic Information of PEEPs-enrolled Children in Pima County (n = 635)**



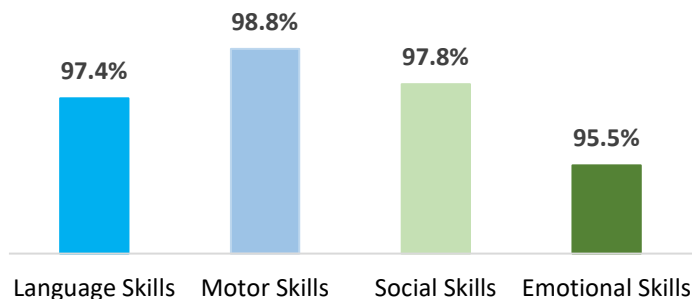
**PEEPs Parent Survey 2023**

CWD PEEPs and Grants Management & Innovation Department’s Research Analysis Division (GMI RAD) staff developed and administered a PEEPs Parent Questionnaire to the parent or guardian of scholarship recipients between November 2022 and February 2023. The survey was offered in English and Spanish languages. The purpose of the survey was to gauge parent satisfaction with their child’s PEEPs preschool experience and to obtain parent perceptions of the benefits of enrolling their child in preschool.

**96% of respondents plan to keep their child in preschool until they enter kindergarten.**

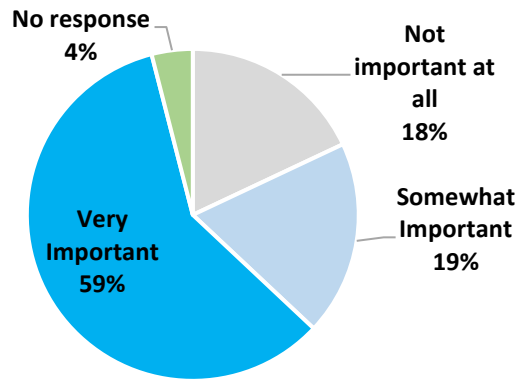
A total of 491 completed PEEPs Parent Survey Questionnaires were collected with 87 completed using the Spanish language form. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out. According to the survey, over 95% of parents were “Very Satisfied” with improvement in their child’s motor skills, social skills, language, and emotional skills (Graph 3).

**Graph 3 – Percentage of PEEPs Parents Who Are “Very Satisfied” with Improvement in Child’s Skills (n = 491)**



In addition, 59% of parents indicated that going back to work and/or increasing their work hours was “Very Important” to their decision to enroll their child in preschool (Graph 4), while 19% of parents indicated that it was “Somewhat Important” to their decision to enroll their child in preschool.

**Graph 4 – Importance of PEEPs for Parent Employment (n = 491)**



The survey responses show that parents are highly satisfied with their experience with PEEPs. Since enrolling their children in the program has provided employment opportunities to parents, PEEPs program will continue beyond the project anticipated period. CSLFRF funding to PEEPs will continue until Year 4 (Fiscal Year 2024/25).

PEEPs Parent Survey 2023 has indicated that both parents and children have benefitted from the PEEPs program. Parents wanted preschool to be a source of enjoyment, safety, skill development, socialization, and maturation for their children.

**95% of parents report that kindergarten readiness and supporting their child’s peer relationships were “very important” reasons for enrolling them in preschool.**

The following five themes were identified in the content analysis of the PEEPs Parent Questionnaire:

**Theme #1:** Parents became aware of PEEPs through internet searches, schools, family, and friends.

**Theme #2:** While most parents (84%) state that the enrollment process was easy, quick, and/or clear, there was a subset of respondents reporting the process as difficult, excessive and/or unclear.

**Theme #3:** Parents indicate PEEPs has been important for their child’s development and for them to focus on personal and family needs.

**Theme #4:** Parents are grateful for: 1) having a safe and reliable place for their children to learn and to grow, and 2) for what the scholarship and preschool attendance has done for children and their parents.

**Theme #5:** Respondents sent strong messages of love toward administrators, staff, schools, and school programs.