



Community Action Opportunities

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Head Start Classrooms Receive NAEYC Accreditation 2004

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The Johnston Elementary Head Start Classroom and the West Buncombe Elementary Head Start Classroom operated by the Opportunity Corporation have recently earned accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This prestigious recognition has been achieved by only 3.4% of early childhood programs nationally and 3.6% statewide.

Buncombe County at 6.3% has a higher percentage of NAEYC accredited childcare programs although that reflects only 8 programs with 4 of those being Head Start classrooms. Fifty percent (50%) of Buncombe County's NAEYC accredited childcare programs are Head Start classrooms. "By earning accreditation, Johnston Elementary Head Start and West Buncombe Head Start classrooms have become leaders in a national effort to raise the quality of early childhood education and to help give all children a better start" said Mark Ginsberg, Ph.D., executive director of NAEYC.

The other two Head Start NAEYC accredited sites are Emma Elementary Head Start and Oakley Elementary Head Start classrooms. Jerrie Honeycutt, Head Start Director said "We will continue to work toward the accreditation of Head Start classrooms, but it takes time, a lot of effort, and a great commitment towards excellence by individual staff members to make it happen".

NAEYC accreditation is a rigorous, voluntary process by which early childhood programs demonstrate that they meet national standards of excellence. Early childhood programs undergo an intensive self-study that includes developing high functioning classrooms, effective curriculum and a highly qualified teaching staff. Classrooms are then observed by a professionally trained NAEYC staff to validate the self-study results. All this information is independently reviewed by a team of national experts who grant or defer accreditation.

"The heart of the NAEYC accreditation focuses on the child's experience," said Jerrie Honeycutt, Head Start Director. Children's language and social skills especially increase from NAEYC accreditation. "These are critical areas for children's success in school as well as in life," said Jerrie Honeycutt.

"We're proud to be accredited by NAEYC, and recognized for our commitment to reaching the highest professional standards," said Vicki Heidinger, Executive Director of the Opportunity Corporation. "NAEYC Accreditation lets families in our community know that children in Head Start are getting the best care and early learning experiences." All four Head Start Classrooms now proudly display the NAEYC torch.

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