

## Director

Jennifer Branch: One of our delegate programs was really looking at the effects of the home-based program. One of the delegates began to look at this three years ago; that there was a decrease in reference to the home-based program, the services in reference to families' attendance. So, they had to look at, on an ongoing basis, the attendance pattern, the home visits that were canceled, and the number of socializations, whether children and parents were able to come in and be involved.

When you took that and looked at that data – three years – what we saw was that there was a – again, a declining in the attendance. The socializations weren't being attended. And then when we decided to look at the reasons that those things were happening was because 1) parents were working or in school and were still hoping to have some way of being connected to a Head Start program and receiving some services since there were no other services available for them to get enrolled in a center-based program.

So, as we looked at that for 24 months in a row, we saw that – we saw this revolving door. People were coming in and they would stay there hoping to get into the center-based program. And so, after we looked at the continuation of that for 24 months, we said, you know, let's do a survey. Let's find out, you know, what the real reason is. And that's what we found out, that parents really were hoping to get in, and some of them would age out. You know, they would be sitting there in the home-based program for two years. They would age out before we could get them in a center-based program.

With that being said, then we determined to make a shift. And that was not easy because changing an option requires that you go through Office of Head Start and seek approval and that you also get your boards' – and here we're talking about the school board and our board of supervisors – approval, and that everyone's on the same page with making that major shift in change. But what drew, I guess, the real decision on making that is that the parents had spoken loudly in reference to the data. It spoke loudly that this was an option that was not the best option for the families in that community that needed the services.

And so, this year, September – actually next week, September the 10th, those children are starting at a new school in a center-based program. So, I think it has really enhanced everyone's knowledge in regarding to – it's not just a set of numbers, you know, that we put in a report and that we move on. We take those set of numbers and we look at them and we try to figure out what is the best way to utilize this data in support of quality programming.