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View the Report for the Office of Head Start

Dear Partners,

The 2020-21 fiscal year was the first year marked from start to end by a global pandemic. After the Carole Robertson Center for Learning temporarily closed its doors in March 2020 during a statewide stay-at-home order, we were among the first early childhood and youth development providers in Chicago to reopen after only three months, adapting to extraordinary conditions under COVID-19 and creating new ways of delivering our high-quality programs. Throughout it all, the Center's leadership and staff remained focused on the tenets of serving with dignity and protecting the well-being of our children, families, and staff. Despite the tremendous upheaval and change for our organization and those we serve every day, the Carole Robertson Center was able to persevere as an anchor for the communities we serve. We have centered this year's annual report on the themes of **growth**, **resilience**, and **impact**.

- By remaining grounded in our core values and always asking the question "If not us, who?", we were able to capitalize on opportunities for incredible **growth** over the course of the year, capped off by securing a \$20 million, 5-year Early Head Start expansion grant from the federal Office of Head Start to deliver high-quality programs to nearly 200 more infants and toddlers.
- The remarkable dedication, endurance, and **resilience** of our workforce were on display as the Carole Robertson Center adapted to meet the needs of those we serve. We opened our doors during the 2020-21 school year for our out-of-school-time youth who needed a safe, conducive space to participate in remote learning. We implemented new pandemic protocols to keep our staff and families safe and healthy while limiting program closures. Throughout the pandemic, we have stood firm in our emphasis on holistic youth development, recognizing the critical role we play in supporting academic and social-emotional learning.
- The Carole Robertson Center never wavered from its commitment to providing high-quality early childhood education and youth development programs with family support and mental health services undergirding all programs. We continued to adapt and respond to the needs of our children, youth, and families. For example, after recognizing the concerns around pandemic learning loss, the Center invested in staff reading specialists to work alongside our youth participants. We know that our programs and resources have a lasting **impact** on those we serve through academic gains, social-emotional skill development, and more.





The 2020-21 fiscal year marked the beginning of an extraordinary period of growth for the Center and our ability to serve our communities. As you read the pages that follow, we hope you will appreciate not only the facts and figures from this year, but also the amazing stories that would not be possible without our dedicated partners. To our families, staff, donors, and partners, thank you for all that you have done to make this work possible at the Carole Robertson Center for Learning.

In gratitude,

Bela Moté

PRESIDENT & CEO

Carter Culver

BOARD CHAIR

WHO WE ARE

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning was founded in 1976 on the principle of being by, for, and with the communities we serve. The Carole Robertson Center is a nonprofit organization serving approximately 2,000 children, youth, and their families across Chicago, with a significant presence in the North Lawndale, Little Village, and Albany Park communities. The Center is one of the largest early childhood organizations in the City of Chicago, serving linguistically and culturally diverse populations across 27 communities. Our programs reach children at every stage of development, from prenatal to age 17.

The Center is a recognized leader in early childhood education and is accredited and recognized through national and state entities, including the National Association for the Education of Young Children (since 2004) and ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality (since 2008).

OUR MISSION

To educate, enrich, and empower children and families.

Our mission is rooted in the legacy of Carole Robertson, one of four little girls killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. We commit to this mission so that all children, regardless of their zip code, will have the opportunity to thrive in school and life—an opportunity denied to our namesake.

OUR VISION

To help build a just and equitable society, the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, in partnership with families, will be a beacon of best practices, innovation, and impact in early childhood and youth development.

OUR CORE VALUES

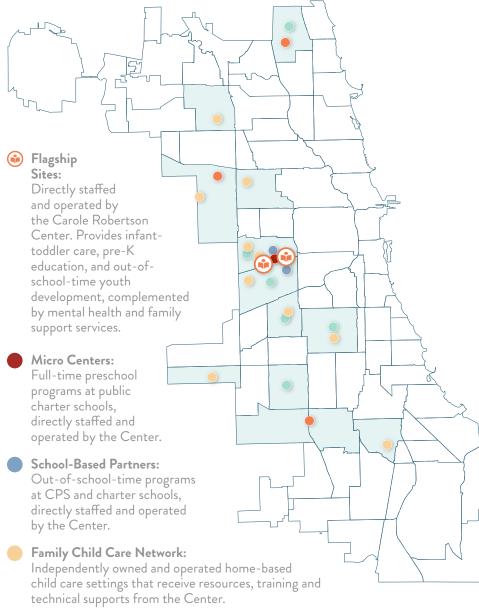


WHERE AND HOW WE SERVE

The Carole Robertson Center provides an array of options so that families have access to the high-quality care and enrichment that will allow children to thrive in school and life.

PROGRAM LOCATIONS, FISCAL YEAR 2021

July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021



Center-Based Partners:

Independently owned and operated early education centers that receive resources, training and technical supports from the Center.

Home Visiting Communities:

Communities in which services are offered by home visiting specialists who visit and coach expectant and new parents, focusing on the caregiver-child relationship.

FY 2021 MILESTONES

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, the Center achieves a series of unprecedented milestones.

In June 2020, our sites are among the first to reopen to provide services after the COVID-19 stay-at-home order.

The Center invests in a variety of resources and technology platforms for learning, to stay connected with and support families, and to maintain a safe environment.

These include digital platforms for town halls and check ins, and learning tech platforms to foster home/school connections.

To prioritize the health and well-being of our staff and families, we invest in technology and resources that allow effective health monitoring and protection.

We provide home learning materials and essential supplies to all families.

FALL 2020

The Center receives community saturation funding from Illinois Action for Children.

We are one of three organizations selected for the Community Parenting Saturation Project Award, designed to saturate the North Lawndale community with parenting and family supports aimed to best prepare children for kindergarten.

OCTOBER 2020

The Center expands service hours for school-age youth in response to pandemic.

To address the needs of families, we begin expanded hours to provide our out-of-school-time learners with all-day services for remote learning during CPS closures.

FY 2021 MILESTONES, cont'd

JANUARY 2021

The Center initiates remote OST programming at partner schools KIPP Ascend Primary and Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy.

This expands the geographic growth and diversity of our OST programs.

FEBRUARY 2021

The Center launches its Program Learning, Evaluation, Scale, and Dissemination (LESD) department.

The LESD team codifies and scales best practices of learning and evaluation, grounded in the strengths and opportunities of each community served and each service delivery model we implement.

MARCH 2021

The Center receives a \$20 Million, 5-year Early Head Start (EHS) Expansion Award.

Through this grant, the Center begins a partnership that leads to the acquisition of our third flagship site later in the year.

Our partner network grows from 12 family child care providers to 23 over the course of the year, and the center-based partner network grows from two to seven.

For the full story of our growth in calendar year 2021, read our report Deepening Our Roots & Impact Across Chicago.



OVERVIEW OF OUR PROGRAMS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

PRENATAL TO 5 YEARS OLD



The Carole Robertson Center for Learning is one of the only nonprofit organizations in Chicago that offers every early childhood **service delivery model**: flagship site-based early childhood education (6 weeks to 5 years); a network of family childcare homes (Family Child Care Network); home visiting for expecting parents and children 0–5 years; dedicated pre-K classrooms in charter elementary schools operated and staffed by the Center (micro centers); and small centerbased partner sites. This array of options ensures families have choices and access to the high-quality care and enrichment that will allow their children to be ready for kindergarten, so as to thrive in school and life.

Nearly all children aged 0–5 served by the Center are from families residing in under-resourced communities. Our home visiting programs focus on hard-to-reach communities that may have barriers to accessing more traditional early childhood education, including parenting teens, mothers facing perinatal challenges, immigrant communities, and formerly incarcerated fathers.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME (OST)



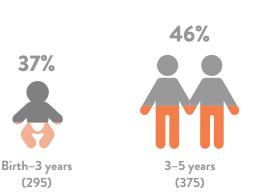
5-17 YEARS OLD

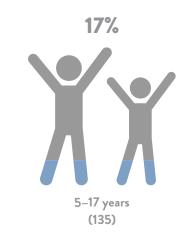
The Center provides out-of-school-time (OST) programming at our flagship sites and local schools, allowing us to serve youth ages 5 to 17 before and after school, as well as during the summer. There is a strong tie between our OST and early childhood programs: 90 percent of OST program participants also participated in the Center's early learning programs. The Center's OST programs foster a love of learning, build curiosity, and support young people's academic readiness, social-emotional skills, and identity development.

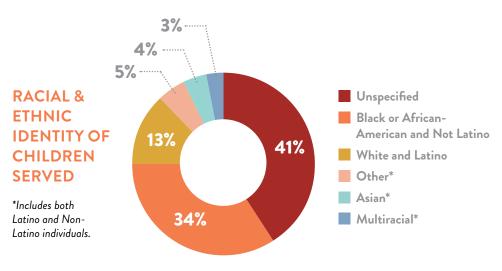
FAMILY SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT

Comprehensive family support is woven into programs for children of all ages and their families. As caregivers are enrolling their children and youth into a Center program, family support specialists work with them to make benchmark assessments, develop goals and care plans, and determine if the family has needs that could be addressed through referrals to partner agencies. As their children's first teachers, parents are our partners in their children's growth and success.

AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED

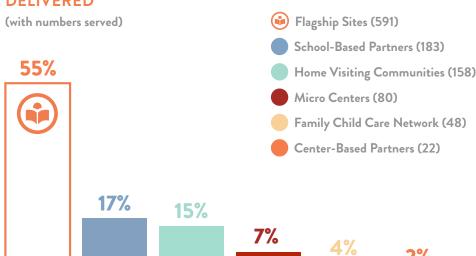
















EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

PRENATAL TO 5 YEARS OLD

TEACHERS AND FAMILY SUPPORT STAFF are the bedrock of our ECE programs, providing **early education**, **health and nutrition**, and **innovative strategies** to build school readiness.

Whether services are provided directly by the Carole Robertson Center (flagship sites, micro centers, home visiting) or through partners (family child care providers, center-based partners)—children receive responsive, high-quality care and education that promotes their cognitive, social-emotional, and physical growth.

Partners in the communities we serve benefit through **professional development** opportunities, **mentorship**, access to **curricular and enrichment resources**, and critical **COVID-related supplies**.

In March 2021, the Carole Robertson Center was awarded a **\$20** million, **5-year Early Head Start (EHS) Expansion Award** from the U.S. Administration of Children and Families, nearly doubling early childhood services for our youngest learners.

EHS is a federally funded program that **promotes school readiness for children aged 0-3 from low-income families**. The award allows the Center to serve an additional 185 infants, toddlers, and expectant mothers each year.

For metrics on the developmental outcomes of children in our early childhood program, see the Appendix on pp. 22–23.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

Monica Pierce's House of Huggz: Just Like Home

Monica Pierce's House of Huggz is one of the 23 independent provider homes that comprise Carole Robertson Center's Family Child Care Network (FCCN), which offers high-quality early childhood education options in homelike settings.

Family child care providers are both **educators and entrepreneurs**: businesses, owned largely by women of color, that strengthen their neighborhood's economy while helping the next generation to succeed in life.

As a member of Carole Robertson Center's FCCN, Monica receives mentorship, training and technical assistance, a food program, COVID supplies, business coaching, and learning resources that she would otherwise need to pay for out-of-pocket.

As an educator with more than 30 years of experience in the early childhood field, Monica provides full-time day and after school programs for a dozen or more children a day, ranging in age from 6 weeks to 12 years. She considers herself blessed to have years of longevity with many children and families in her care, and believes her program format is successful because of the close-knit environment: "I open myself, my home, my family. I take on families as if they're my family."

Most of her parents work as essential workers, and weathering COVID has been easier with the Center's support. Funding from the Center has helped her increase her assistant's wages and purchase art supplies and Creative Curriculum, a premier early childhood curriculum. The Carole Robertson Center is "constantly asking what I need,"



said Monica. "I get excited when I talk about how they've helped me become a better provider. Chicago Public School teachers tell me that my kids—Carole Robertson Center kids—are more advanced, compared with others."



I OPEN MYSELF, MY HOME, MY FAMILY.
I TAKE ON FAMILIES AS IF THEY'RE
MY FAMILY.

- MONICA PIERCE





Supporting Parents as First Teachers in Refugee Communities

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

Since 2019, the Carole Robertson Center has partnered with the Rohingya Cultural Center in the West Ridge community area to provide home visiting services to the Rohingya refugee community that has resettled in Chicago. Described by the United Nations as one of the world's most persecuted minority groups, the Muslim Rohingya people have long been subject to ethnic and religious oppression and brutal treatment in their home country of Myanmar.

Sixty families in Chicago's Rohingya community are served by home visitors—sometimes known as traveling teachers—who support new parents from pregnancy through the parenting of their young children. Regular home visits focus on **physical**, **social-emotional**, **and cognitive growth** through interactions between caregiver and child. The home visitors themselves hail from the Rohingya community: Five women have gained professional

development and employment as home visitors through the Carole Robertson Center in order to serve their own community. This partnership strengthens and creates economic opportunities for traumatized families.

In addition, recruiting staff from the diverse communities we serve allows us to better provide culturally sensitive care. Because the Rohingya language has no widely accepted written form, home visitors must communicate verbally; though many Rohingya speak other languages, such as Burmese, discrimination in their country prevented literacy education.

According to Home Visiting Manager Pilar Gomez, "In partnership with our home visitors, we are committed to empowering and serving the Rohingya community, for women to succeed, for their generations to thrive with opportunities and dignity."

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR HOME VISITORS, WE ARE COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING AND SERVING THE ROHINGYA COMMUNITY.

- PILAR GOMEZ, HOME VISITING MANAGER











OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME (OST)

5 TO 17 YEARS OLD

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, EMBODIED IN OUR OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME (OST) PROGRAMS, is at the root of the Center's creation story: In 1976, a group of parents mobilized to fill the gap created when their beloved after-school program on the West Side was forced to close due to financial difficulties. They understood the importance of such programs for youth and their families.

As of June 2021, the Center served 135 youth ages 5–17 at the two flagship sites in Little Village and North Lawndale and two school-based partner sites, KIPP Ascend Primary and Saucedo Scholastic Academy. Our programs support youth academically, socially, emotionally, and physically; youth are able to develop their talents, explore career interests, and engage with the outside world.

2020-21 HIGHLIGHTS: LITERACY

INITIATIVES

- · Create intervention plans for all students behind in reading
- Provide **one-on-one interventions with our reading specialist** for students who are further behind
- Partner with Open Books for additional literacy support
- Institute "Book Clubs" specific to reading level

RESULTS*

- 95% of kindergartners improved in at least 4 of 7 assessment areas
- 92% of first graders improved in 5 of 7 assessment areas
- 78% of first graders who received consistent reading intervention went from at-risk to target scores in 2 of 3 of the foundational reading assessment areas
- **75% of second and third graders** who received consistent intervention went from at-risk to reading at grade level.

*The results are based on these assessment areas:
Alphabet recognition
Story listening
Phonemic awareness
One-to-one matching
Letter sounds
Developmental spelling
Word recognition

OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME (OST)

The Chocolate Chip Cookie Challenge

As OST Lead Mentor at Carole Robertson Center's Little Village site, Jaziman Martin has worked with many children and youth to provide academic enrichment, social-emotional development and homework support, most recently with children in the second through fourth grades. Some of the work helps the students **develop team-building and problem-solving skills**—skills they will need for studies, work, and life.

One opportunity that the Center has offered is

Destination Imagination, a STEAM*-based international competition for students from kindergarten through high school. The focus for spring 2021 was fine arts and theater, and each group of students improvised a solution that had to meet certain requirements: there had to be a character, the character had to teach the audience something, and the children had to learn something from the project. From these requirements was born "The Chocolate Chip Cookie Challenge." The team earned points for creativity, information, and teamwork, progressing from regional to national competition.

The teacher's role in this production was as facilitator—to make sure that all the students were able to present their ideas, work together effectively, and have the materials they needed—but also help the other students, who didn't advance to the next level, acquire the social-emotional skills to cope with the disappointment. For Jaziman, who has a background in community activism and social work, "So much in life is literally working together to reach the greater goal. These children will know how to think on the spot, use technology, and be innovative."





EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A CHALLENGE FOR ME I STILL LOVED AND LEARNED SO MUCH.

I WAS ABLE TO BE CREATIVE AND WORK ON BEING A TEAM PLAYER. CHOCOLATE

CHIP COOKIE TEAM FOREVER!

- AVIANA HUITRON, GRADE 4



FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

OUR FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALISTS help children reach their full potential by providing comprehensive supports to enrolled children, youth and families. Family Support Specialists are often the first people families meet upon enrolling in a program. They develop relationships with parents, support them in setting and achieving goal plans, and assist them in accessing resources to meet their family's needs.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Percentages of children in our ECE programs who access various types of care from ages 0–3 and 3–5.

0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100
Had co	ntinuous access	sible medical care (0-3)	76%	
Receive	ed all required i	mmunizations (0-3	3)	82%	
Had co	ntinuous denta	l care (0-3)	69%		
Had he	alth insurance ((0-3)			99%
Had co	ntinuous access	sible medical care (3-5)	89%	
Receive	ed all required i	mmunizations (3-5)	90%	
Had co	ntinuous denta	l care (3-5)		85%	
Had he	alth insurance ((3-5)			100%

Family Support Specialists work to empower parents as their children's first teachers and as advocates for their families.

From Parent to Family Support Specialist:

Forming Trusted Connections

In October 2017, Laura Garcia brought her infant daughter to the Carole Robertson Center in Little Village, just blocks from her home. Laura was in college studying psychology and needed care for her child. "I really like having her here," Laura says, noting the strong connection that the teachers built with her family, and how they would update her with pictures and videos about her daughter's growing skills.

In late 2020, Laura, whose then 3-year-old daughter was enrolled in pre-kindergarten at the Carole Robertson Center, was asked by staff if she was interested in a job with the Center. Since she had a passion for working with families and children and was considering a career in social work, she seized the opportunity, starting as a family support specialist in June 2021. She takes care to **build trust with families by remembering conversations**, whether in English or Spanish. "They approach me and open up. I try to build great communication by checking in to see if they need anything. I ask them about things they told me—they know I was listening."

When children need the **extra support of an early intervention**, Laura reaches out to the Center's partners for various therapies, such as speech and developmental, that are provided on-site. Progress can be rapid when services are integrated: "Many children show a lot of improvement in just months."

Other families may need support with shelter, light and gas bills, or employment. Laura helps parents learn how to apply for jobs by sharing her screen during Zoom meetings.

From connections born of trust, families and their children grow together.





I TRY TO BUILD GREAT COMMUNICATION
BY CHECKING IN TO SEE IF THEY
NEED ANYTHING. I ASK THEM ABOUT
THINGS THEY TOLD ME—THEY KNOW
I WAS LISTENING.

- LAURA GARCIA,
FAMILY SUPPORT SPECIALIST





LOOKING AHEAD TO FY 2022

The second half of calendar year 2021 brings even more transformation and growth to the Carole Robertson Center.

We look forward to sharing more in the FY 2022 annual report!

EXPANSION

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT







FY 2021 Financial Reporting, Revenue & Expenses*

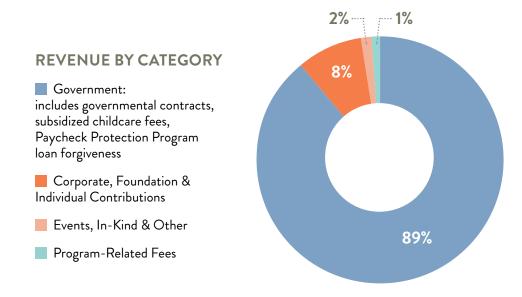
ASSETS

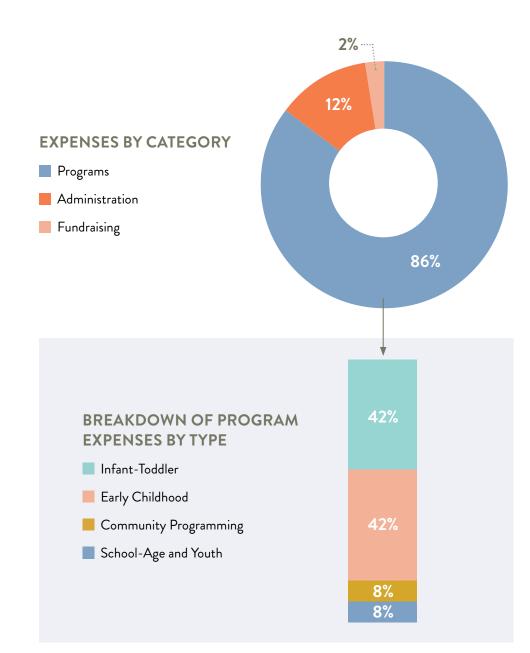
CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$6,023,313
Accounts receivable, net	\$5,003,626
Grants and pledges receivable, net	\$195,088
Prepaid expenses	\$84,194
Total current assets	\$11,306,221
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	
Facility	\$6,934,127
Other property and equipment	\$2,215,527
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(\$6,305,203)
Net property and equipment	\$2,844,451
RESTRICTED CASH	
Total restricted cash	\$126,502
Total Assets	\$14,277,174

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Accounts payable	\$838,260			
Accrued expenses	\$512,768			
Current portion of capital leases	\$65,024			
Total current liabilities	\$1,416,052			
NONCURRENT LIABILITIES				
Noncurrent portion of capital leases	\$56,678			
Paycheck Protection Program Ioan	\$933,289			
Total noncurrent liabilities	\$989,967			
Total liabilities	\$2,406,019			
NET ASSETS				
Without donor restrictions	\$9,685,263			
With donor restrictions	\$2,185,892			
Total net assets	\$11,871,155			
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$14,277,174			

^{*}Unaudited. Audited financials will be available on our website at a later date.











BOARD OF DIRECTORS

as of July 2022

Carter Culver

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Honorary Robertson Family Representative

Jamellah Braddock Ellis

Honorary Robertson Family Representative

Bela Moté

CAROLE ROBERTSON
CENTER FOR LEARNING
President & CEO, Ex-Officio

View the full Donor Honor Roll





APPENDIX

PERCENT OF
CHILDREN
MEETING OR
EXCEEDING
DEVELOPMENTAL
STANDARDS BY
CONTENT AREA
AND AGE

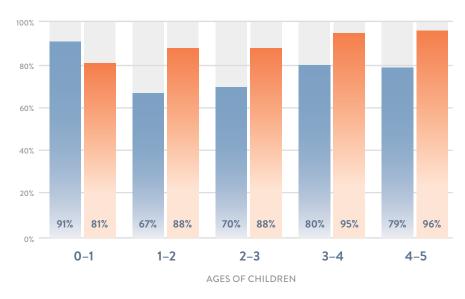
Fall 2020 Spring 2021



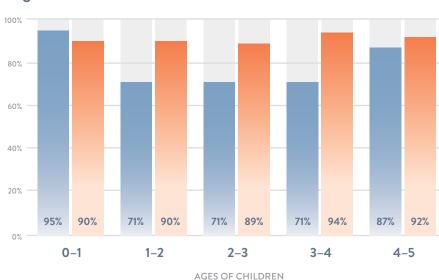


EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

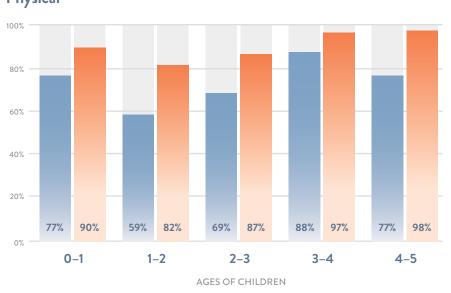
Social-Emotional



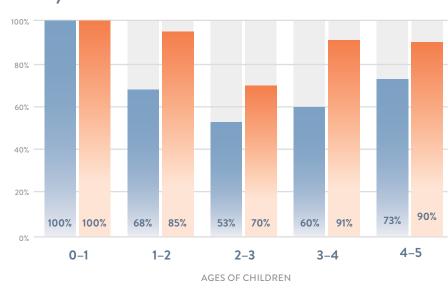
Cognitive



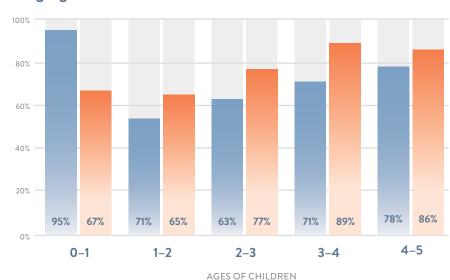
Physical



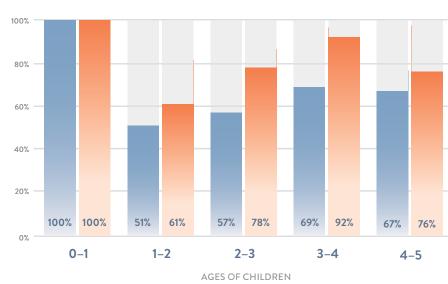
Literacy



Language



Mathematics



The Carole Robertson Center collects and reports metrics indicating children's development according to "widely held expectations" as defined by Teaching Strategies Gold, the assessment tool used in conjunction with Creative Curriculum, a best-practices ECE curriculum used by Center educators.







CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER

for Learning

FOR FAMILIES, BY FAMILIES, WITH FAMILIES

Carole Robertson Center for Learning pairs high-quality education and enrichment for children and youth with one-on-one support services to open opportunities for the whole family.



AN HONOR AND RESPONSIBILITY

Since its inception, the Center has worked to honor the life and memory of Carole Robertson who, together with her friends Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, and Denise McNair, was killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Administrative Offices Carole Robertson Center for Learning 1111 South Western Ave., Suite B Chicago, IL 60612 (312) 243 7300

CaroleRobertsonCenter.org







