

WHAT IS THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER FOR?



Nurturing the Joy of Learning

Annual Report | Fiscal Year 2022



CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER
for Learning

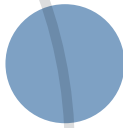


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To view the Report for the Office of
 Head Start, visit our website:
[www.carolrobertsoncenter.org/
 office-of-head-start-annual-report/](http://www.carolrobertsoncenter.org/office-of-head-start-annual-report/)



JOINT LETTER FROM OUR CEO AND CHAIRMAN

Dear Partners,

In Fiscal Year 2022, the Carole Robertson Center emerged from the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic experiencing a **dramatic and invigorating growth cycle**. Amid the uncertainty that accompanied a global adjustment to post-pandemic life, **our reach expanded historically in ways that affected the entire organization**.

With increased funding, our budget grew from \$16 million to over \$27 million, leading to an **expansion of our overall geographic footprint and the corresponding sizes of our board, staff, programs, and infrastructure**. As we navigated uncharted territory and adjusted to the Center's growing reach and impact, one thing always remained a constant: **our commitment to our roots as a community-based, community-driven organization**.

The Center's lasting commitment of working for, by, and with the communities we serve produced a rich medium for us to **strengthen program innovations, like our Grow Your Own apprenticeship model**, over the course of the year. By recruiting, training, and providing educational and credentialing opportunities to aspiring educators from our communities, we tackle the early childhood education workforce shortage head on while serving as an engine of economic empowerment for our city. We're excited about the great promise this apprenticeship model holds to help advance our organization's social justice and equity initiatives in the long term. (See pp. 14-15.)

Policy and advocacy initiatives also came to the forefront this year with the establishment of our **Community-Based Advocacy Strategy**. We strengthened collaboration among our families, workforce, and local networks to amplify community voices and lived experiences. Together, we worked as a true coalition, conveying to government and sector leaders the urgency of building structures and systems to support early learning and youth development. These efforts bolster the Center's ability to **contribute authentically to external roundtables, interviews, and media stories that guide systemic change and implementation**. (See pp. 16-17.)

During Fiscal Year 2022, the Center undoubtedly reached new heights as a **beacon of learning and empowerment for the communities we serve**. In this report, you'll learn more about the ways we grew, innovated, and responded to need and opportunity—as well as how we're preparing for our next chapter. Thanks to the dedication and support of our families, staff, donors, and partners, we know we're nowhere near done with our impact and growth, and that we will continue to **prioritize the joy of learning** as we forge ahead. After all, "learning" is in our name!

In gratitude,



Bela Moté
PRESIDENT & CEO



Carter Culver
BOARD CHAIR



"With our growth, we've become stronger catalysts for change."

- BELA MOTÉ

MILESTONES

JULY 2021

Carole Robertson Center receives a \$103 million, 5-year Head Start (HS) & Early Head Start (EHS) award

- One of six grantees of the federal government chosen to administer HS and EHS programs in Chicago.
- Enables the Center to serve a total of 666 Head Start and 513 Early Head Start children and their families. (In addition to 185 EHS slots through our expansion award)



AUGUST 2021

The Carole Robertson Center acquires Albany Park Community Center

- Brings stability to the Albany Park community by expanding education programs for nearly 300 children and youth.

Community-based advocacy launches

- Amplifies family, community, and staff voice and advances pro-child policy.

NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER 2021

Center participates in citywide wage equity study to increase staff compensation

- Ensures competitive and equitable alignment of staff roles, compensation, and benefits.
- Organization-wide equity adjustments made as a result of the study increase staff wages by average of 7%.



SEPTEMBER 2021

Center's OST programming expands with new school partner, Lawndale Community Academy, thanks to 21st Century Community Learning Center grant

- 135 new students served through afterschool club model.

State of Illinois conveys 2929 W. 19th St. facility to Carole Robertson Center

- Center gains permanent ownership of Little Village site.

JUNE 2022

Center receives notification of new Illinois Department of Human Services Home Visiting award

- Enables Center to continue helping Rohingya refugee families access resources and services.

MAY 2022

Center relaunches its Annual Celebration

- First in-person annual fundraiser since 2019 celebrates our early childhood and youth development staff—the “workforce behind the workforce.”



GROWTH

In FY2022, the Carole Robertson Center experienced tremendous **expansion in the number of children and communities we reach and the size of our workforce**. We credit this growth to a number of major federal and private grants and growth in our physical footprint. The maps below show our growth from FY2021 to FY2022—also see our report, *Deepening Our Roots & Impact Across Chicago*, for full details: bit.ly/Expansion-Update.



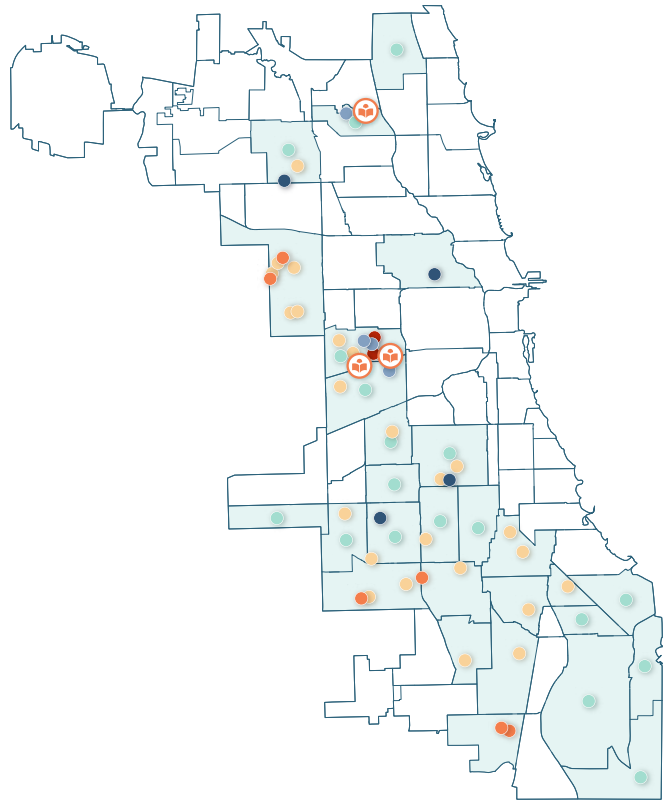
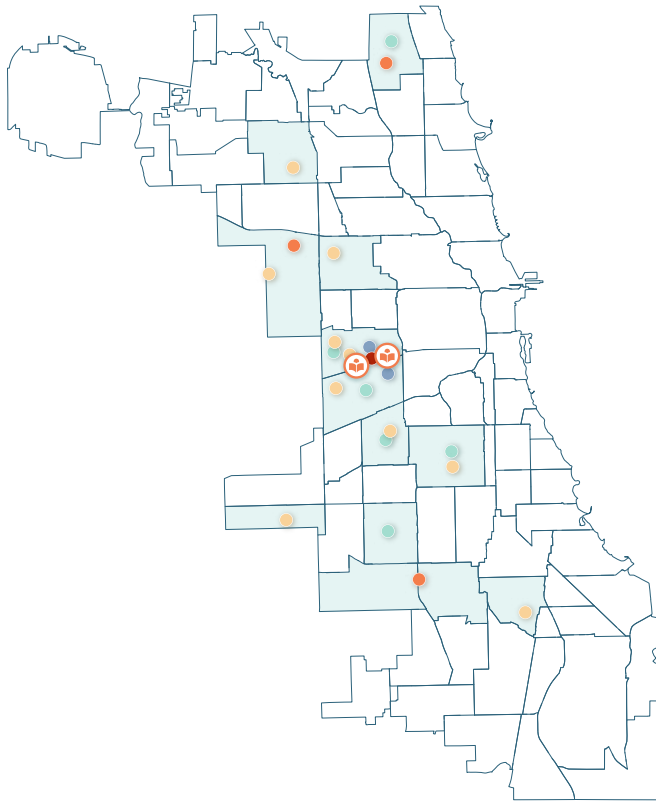
This transformational growth has resulted from our emphasis on continuous improvement, as well as peers' and funders' trust in us and recognition of our leadership in the industry.





Amidst this growth, we have remained steadfast in our dedication to provide services at no or little cost to families in under-resourced communities.




PROGRAM LOCATIONS

Fiscal Year 2021 (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021)

Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022)



-  **Flagship Sites:** Directly staffed and operated by the Carole Robertson Center. Provides infant-toddler care, pre-K education, and out-of-school-time youth development, complemented by mental health & family support services.
-  **Micro Centers:** Early childhood education sites offering full-time preschool programs at public charter schools, directly staffed and operated by the Center.
-  **School-Based Partners:** Out-of-school-time programs at partner CPS and charter schools, directly staffed and operated by the Carole Robertson Center.
-  **Family Child Care Network:** Independently owned and operated home-based child care settings that receive resources, training, and technical supports from the Center

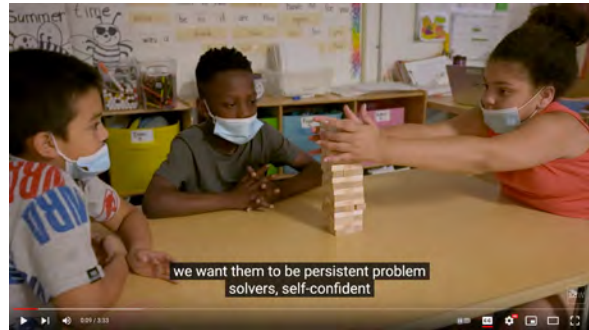
-  **Center-Based Partners:** Independently owned and operated early education centers that receive resources, training, and technical supports from the Center.
-  **Home Visiting Communities:** Communities in which services are offered by home visiting specialists who visit and coach expectant and new parents, focusing on the caregiver(s)-child relationship.
-  **Delegate Organizations:** As a direct grantee of the Office of Head Start, the Center distributes EHS and HS resources to two community-based organizations: Metropolitan Family Services and Erie House, which operate multiple service delivery sites (as shown on map).

THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER IS FOR...

Nurturing the Joy of Learning

AT THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER, WE **PREPARE** children for a **joyful lifetime of learning and discovery**. Whether a child is in our Early Childhood Education program (ages 0-5) or our Out-of-School-Time program (ages 5-17), our dedicated, professional, and passionate staff work with the child and family to deepen strengths and address areas needing support—academically, physically, emotionally, socially, and economically.

These Education Week videos show the Center's emphasis on **Social-Emotional Learning and mental health supports**.



View video at bit.ly/3KWzJiD



View video at bit.ly/3N9sw1z



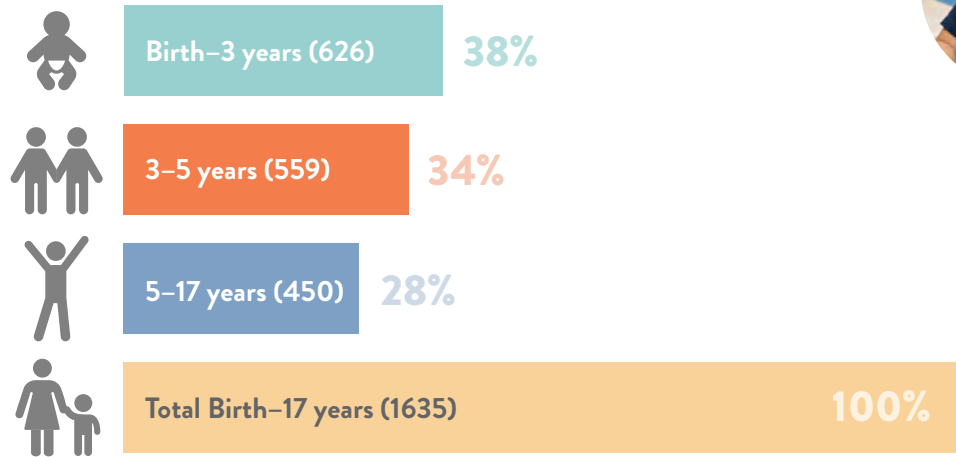
“When we talk about having a child who’s a proactive explorer and investigator, that means that the child has agency and autonomy—that’s really the glue of Social-Emotional Learning.”

— SONJA CRUM KNIGHT
CHIEF PROGRAMS & IMPACT OFFICER

We know that one size does not fit all when it comes to the best setting for early learning. This is why, out of our commitment to family choice, the Center offers **every model of early childhood education**—from large, comprehensive centers to home visiting and everything in between.

We reach children and families not only in the **early learning and youth development programs** we operate, but also via **community partner programs** through the resources and technical support we provide. For example, our family child care provider partners benefit by participating in our **Family Child Care Network**. They gain valuable resources, training, and back-office support through the network, and learn from each others’ experiences. We similarly assist our small, privately owned center partners.

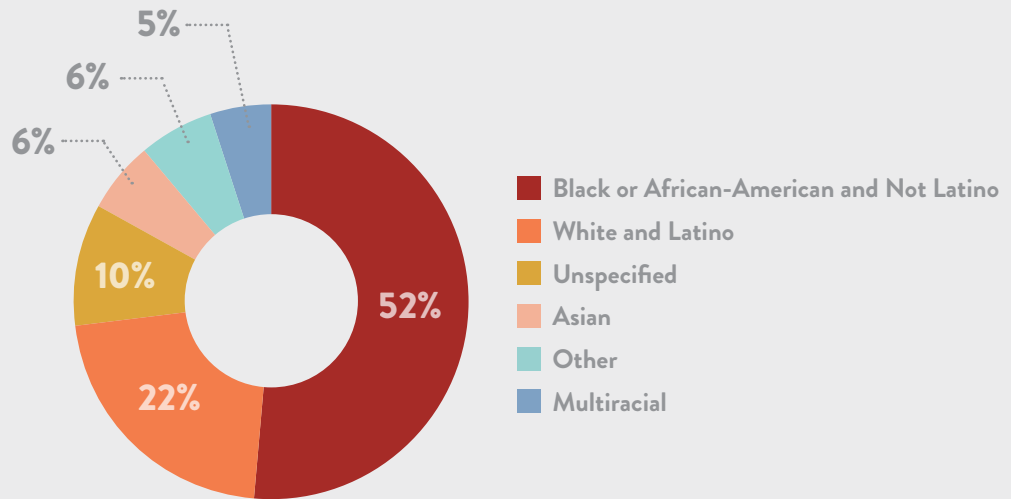
AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED, 2021-22



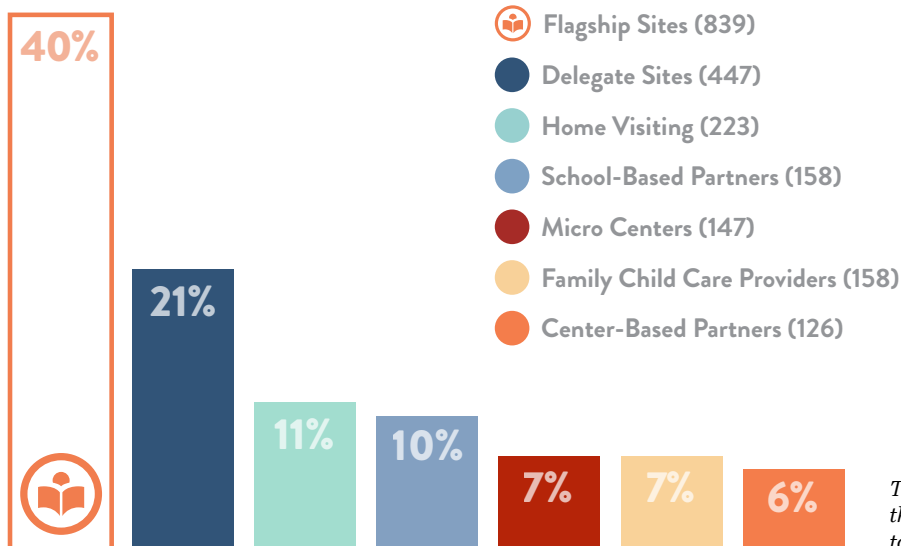
For early childhood developmental outcome data, see p. 18.

RACIAL & ETHNIC IDENTITY OF CHILDREN SERVED

Total is more than 100% due to rounding.



WHERE SERVICES WERE DELIVERED (with numbers served)



Total is more than 100% due to rounding.



THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER IS FOR...

Building an Equitable and Inclusive Society

THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER FOR LEARNING CHAMPIONS the potential of every child, one individual at a time. We believe that a person's zip code should not determine their possibilities or limit their choices in life. We embed the principles of **inclusivity and equity** into all our work—impacting children, families, and staff alike. With nearly all the families we serve at or below the poverty line, our work in equity is especially critical.

The Center's **Social Justice & Equity (SJ&E) Committee** weaves these values into our very curriculum—providing books and activities that support program learning objectives while building cross-cultural awareness and understanding. Our SJ&E work is dedicated to the legacy of our namesake, Carole Robertson, who was one of four young girls killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Through our early childhood and youth programs, we close structural academic and opportunity gaps by **incubating, testing, and then scaling innovative new ideas** at a systems level and through a community lens. Our data tell us we're making impactful and sustainable strides.



“The book tables began as our direct response to the Black Lives Matter movement. This is our effort to create multicultural literacy and anti-bias through books and activities for students and their families.”

– CANDICE WASHINGTON
KINDERGARTEN READINESS
COMMUNITY LIAISON

BOOKS
PROVIDED
TO FAMILIES
10,000+





Portrait of a Pre-Kindergarten Graduate



We have created bridges for our children and youth during school transitions, such as from early learning to kindergarten, that foster long-term academic and life success.



THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER IS FOR...

Enriching the Out-of-School Experiences of Our Youth

THE CENTER SERVES youth (5-17 years of age) through out-of-school-time (OST) programming at our flagship sites in the North Lawndale, Little Village, and Albany Park communities and through partnerships at three Chicago Public Schools. In the 2021–22 program year, 509 children participated in our OST programs, including school breaks and summer camp.

Children and families can count on **stimulating programs in a physically and emotionally safe environment**. We offer two program models: an integrated afterschool program and a club model focusing on specific interests.

In the integrated program, students participate under the guidance of OST Mentors who support their **academic, physical, and social-emotional development through immersive, hands-on experiences**.

For example, in the club model, students dive into activities such as dance, music, drama, gardening, fishing, photography, robotics, woodworking, and community engagement.

“People of color are often made to feel that outdoor activities such as fishing are inaccessible to them or that they do not belong in those spaces. I take [program youth] fishing to try and combat that concept, because no one’s racial identity should keep them from experiencing any part of life.”

– ADAM LEMKE-BELL
TEEN REACH COORDINATOR



Our activities bolster students' academic success while contributing to their creative development and self-exploration.

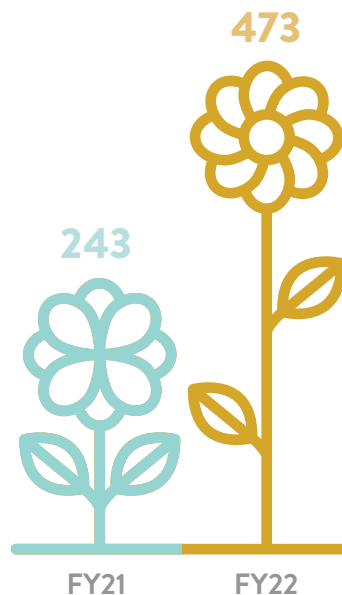
Youth learn the soft and hard skills necessary to succeed in whatever path they choose and exercise strategies to cope with emotional and interpersonal challenges in a healthy manner. OST also exposes students to a variety of college and career options.

Studies of afterschool programs have demonstrated positive outcomes including:

- Increased engagement in school
- Greater school-day attendance
- Fewer unexcused absences
- Fewer disciplinary referrals and behavior problems
- Better academic performance
- Improved social and emotional competencies



NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED IN THE CENTER'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL-TIME PROGRAM*



**Growth due primarily to addition of Albany Park flagship site and school-based partner Lawndale Community Academy.*

THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER IS FOR...

Empowering Families: Children's First Teachers

AT THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER, EMPOWERING THE CHILD happens by creating meaningful and strengths-based partnerships with families. Every time a new child or youth is enrolled in our programs, a dedicated family support specialist evaluates the family's needs and creates a plan for comprehensive family development. From housing, to employment, to mental and physical health services and beyond—our family support team partners with families to access services and resources in the community. They can also determine if a child is eligible for early intervention for special needs.



This video portrays the Center's focus on family support and empowerment. View video at bit.ly/3oAAKWc.



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



“The Carole Robertson Center is a backbone for our families.”

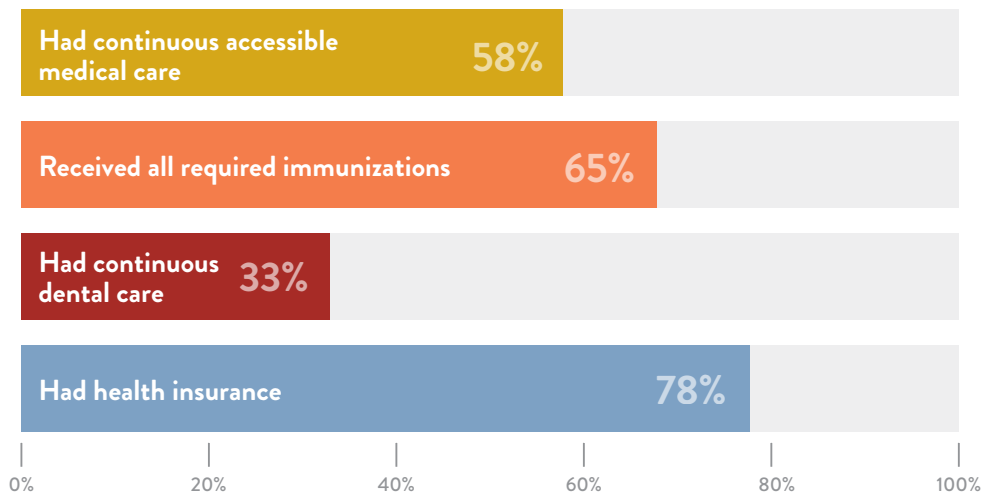
– NORTH LAWDALE PARENT



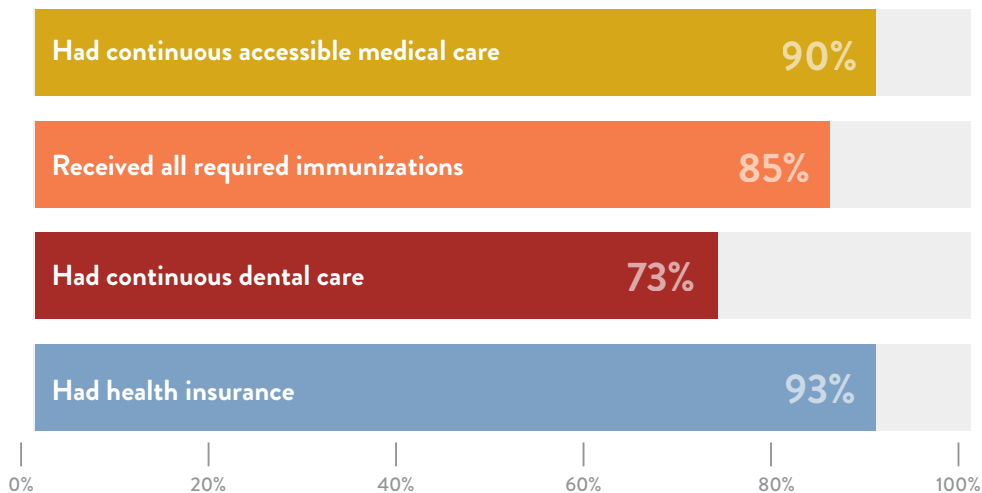
HEALTH CARE ACCESS, 2021-22

Our family support team partners with families to provide myriad supports, including facilitating access to medical and dental care for their children.

Children ages 0–3 in our ECE programs who access various types of care



Children ages 3–5 in our ECE programs who access various types of care



THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER IS FOR...

Growing a Qualified and Passionate Workforce

AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE CENTER'S STORY is innovation that results from rigorous, data-based program support, assessment, and improvement of all aspects of our practice. From professional learning communities and staff development, to growth-sustaining enrichment activities for all our children and youth, to integrated mental and behavioral health support for our families and staff—we are continuously seeking ways to **shape and deliver programs at the cutting edge of excellence.**

One way we innovate is to pilot and scale successful programs, such as our **Grow Your Own apprenticeship model.**

Grow Your Own employs Center parents and other community members as entry-level professionals, while providing academic and on-the-job training for sustainable careers in early education and youth development. By addressing the needs of families and the workforce in tandem, the Center promotes **an economic engine and socioeconomic mobility across multiple generations**, while also providing our youngest learners with high-quality, culturally responsive teachers and support staff. In Fiscal Year 2022, Grow Your Own brought in nearly 30 community members as teacher aides, home visitors, health aides, and teacher assistants. Eight home visitors completed the Home Visiting Child Development Associate (CDA) credential in our inaugural CDA cohort.





“The Grow Your Own program at the Center has allowed me the opportunity to turn my job into a career. In the summer, I’ll be a part of the cohort to receive my Child Development Associate, and that credential will award college credits towards my early childhood degree. I’m grateful to the Governor, and the Carole Robertson Center for the multiple policies and programs that they have in place that have positively impacted my family and my ability to create a career in early childhood.”

- ITANZIA DAWSON
TEACHER AIDE, GROW YOUR OWN PARTICIPANT & PARENT



The Center’s Grow Your Own apprenticeship model works to increase the pipeline of qualified early childhood and youth development educators in response to the critical shortage in the workforce.

THE CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER IS FOR...

Amplifying the Voices of Our Families & Communities

BEGINNING IN SUMMER 2021, the Center launched important new **community-based advocacy initiatives** to impact and influence systemic changes to the early childhood education and youth development landscape. Key priorities include addressing the sector's workforce shortages, wage disparities, and funding structures. We seek to center the voices of our families, staff, and communities in advocating for policy changes that lead to increased federal, state, and local investment and attention to the children we serve.

In the spirit of community and social justice, our goal is to ensure that parents, staff, and providers participate in **identifying, creating and implementing policies that help strengthen and transform** the early childhood and youth development landscape in Illinois.

The formation of a **Staff Advocacy Committee and Staff Policy Champions** allows us to increase our involvement with elected officials on issues related to early learning, youth development, and family engagement specific to underserved families. These efforts provide staff and leaders with lasting opportunities to participate in outside forums, allowing the Center to contribute authentically to external roundtables, interviews, and media stories that are effectively guiding systemic change.



“Our families and staff have rich life experiences that deserve to be front and center when discussing solutions to the current child care crisis. Our community-based advocacy approach is rooted in uplifting their stories to ensure that they contribute to potential solutions to improving the ecosystem.”

– JULISSA CRUZ
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY



“By joining the Advocacy Committee, I have participated in activities that allow me to bring things to the table and in front of people who can make things happen.”

– MARSHANAE MACK
TEACHER AIDE AND PARENT



For more, see our report *Amplifying Voices, Advancing Advocacy*: bit.ly/Advocacy-Roadmap.



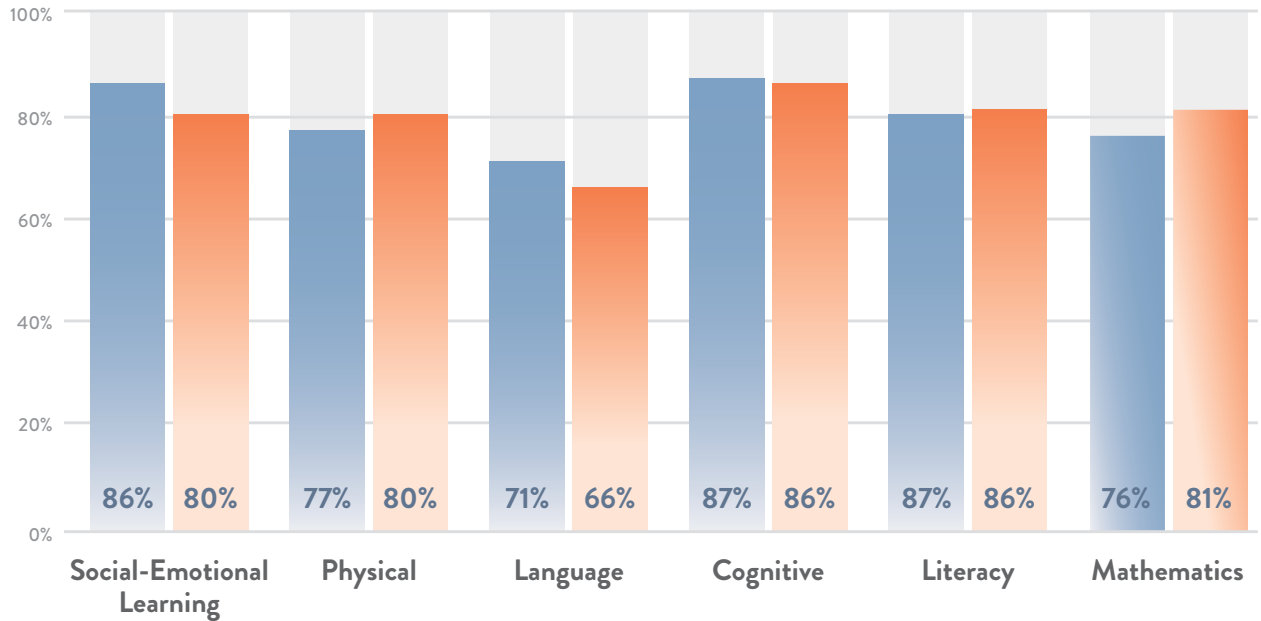
Our advocacy priorities are to strengthen the workforce, cultivate advocacy champions, and contribute to policy development.



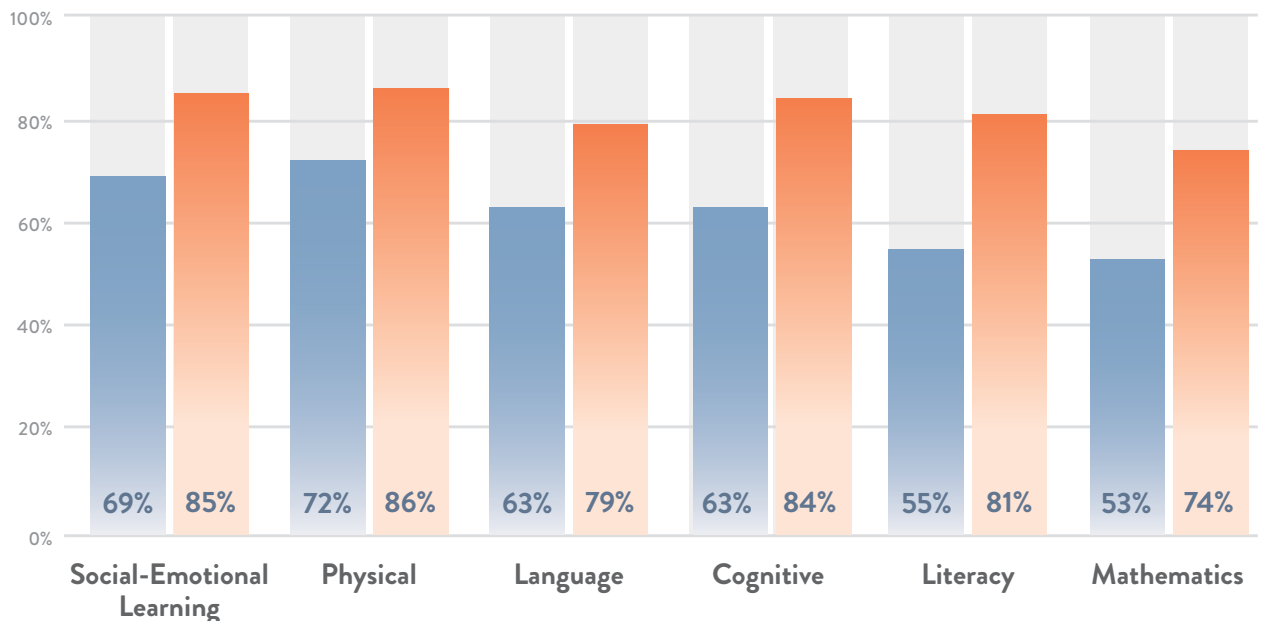
APPENDIX: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES

● Fall 2021 ● Spring 2022

PERCENT OF CHILDREN 0–3 MEETING OR EXCEEDING DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS BY CONTENT AREA



PERCENT OF CHILDREN 3–5 MEETING OR EXCEEDING DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS BY CONTENT AREA



Note: 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.

We recognize the important responsibility we hold to nurture the potential in each child, including how our rising kindergartners show up on the first day of elementary school.



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Fiscal year ending June 30, 2022
(Audited Financial Statement Extracts)



ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$7,548,773
Receivables (All)	\$5,120,559
Prepaid expenses	\$478,775
Total current assets	\$13,148,107
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	
Land	\$1,800,000
Facility	\$7,002,338
Other property and equipment	\$1,034,529
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(\$5,226,967)
Net property and equipment	\$4,609,900
Total Assets	\$17,884,509

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable	\$1,473,387
Accrued expenses	\$890,496
Current portion of capital leases	\$59,561
Total current liabilities	\$2,423,444
NONCURRENT LIABILITIES	
Noncurrent portion of capital leases	\$173,299
Total noncurrent liabilities	\$173,299
Total liabilities	\$2,596,743
NET ASSETS	
Without donor restrictions	\$13,139,075
With donor restrictions	\$2,148,691
Total net assets	\$15,287,766
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$17,884,509

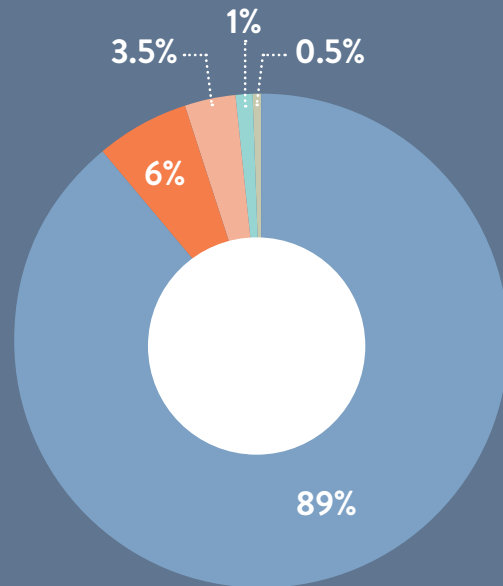
To view our full Audited Financial Statement, visit our website:



www.carolerobertsoncenter.org/financial-statements/

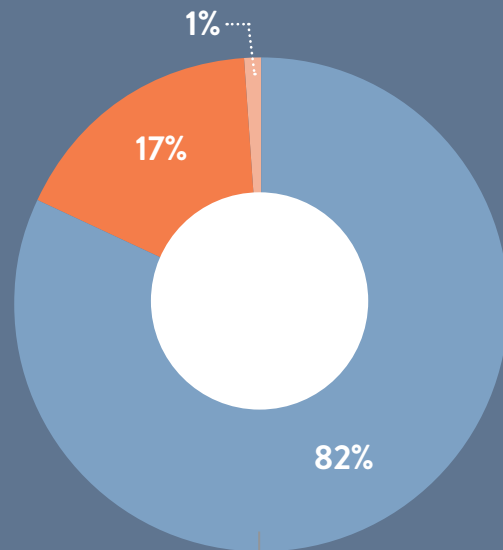
REVENUE BY CATEGORY

- Public Funding – includes Federal, State, City and County Contracts
- Corporate, Foundation & Individual Contributions
- Albany Park Community Center Acquisition – Net, Excess of Fair Value/Net Assets Over Liabilities
- Events, In-Kind & Other
- Program-Related Fees



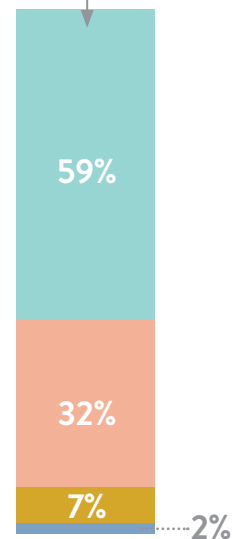
EXPENSES BY CATEGORY

- Programs
- Administration
- Fundraising



BREAKDOWN OF PROGRAM EXPENSES BY TYPE

- Infant-Toddler
- Early Childhood
- School-Age and Youth
- Community Programming



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

as of June 2023

Carter Culver

EXELON CORPORATION

Chair

Jessica Gaito

NEUROCRINE BIOSCIENCE

Vice Chair

Scott Ahlman

John Blasi

ACCENTURE

Christine Brambila

ILLINOIS CHILDREN'S
HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

Alumni Representative

Stefanie Kruse Curley

WALGREENS

Paul Foley

VISIBLY

Cornelia Grumman

Larry Hightower

HIGHTOWER AND BOLER

Contessa Houston

Vice Chair

Parent Policy Council

Olusegun Ishmael MD, MBA

METROHEALTH

CLEVELAND

Maribel Lopez

COOK COUNTY
HEALTH SYSTEMS

Alumni Parent Representative

Larry Mages

Kelsey Malnati Howell

MARC AND JEANNE MALNATI
FAMILY FOUNDATION

Kurt Mamon

KURT MAMON INSURANCE CO,
STATE FARM

Sonya Moore

Chair

Parent Policy Council

Rani Williams

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS HEALTH

Dave Robertson

PMC TREASURY

Nick Scodro

RBN INSURANCE SERVICES

John Smith

ACH FOOD COMPANIES, INC.

Joanne Steinback

Dianne Robertson Braddock

Honorary Robertson

Family Representative

Jamellah Braddock Ellis

Honorary Robertson

Family Representative

Bela Moté

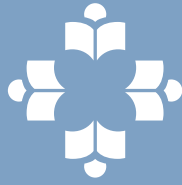
CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER
FOR LEARNING

President & CEO, Ex-Officio



To view our Donor Honor Roll, visit our website:
www.carolerobertsoncenter.org/giving-honor-roll/





CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER
for Learning

OUR MISSION

To educate, enrich, and empower children and families.

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.

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.



Thank You Gail!
for all you give
the kids & staff

Gladster
My daughter
Joan School

Thank you
for all the
help you
give the
kids & staff

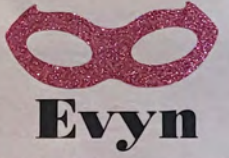
The staff
is very
nice & helps

I LOVE
Carole Robertson
& her
staff

Keep loving
our babies!
We need
you all!

Thank
you
for
everything

Continue to
amazing work
you guys are
truly
awesome!



Evyn
mini
SUPER
HERO

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CAROLE ROBERTSON
Center for Learning