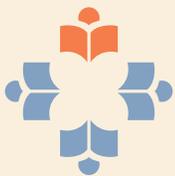


VOICES OF IMPACT



CAROLE ROBERTSON CENTER
for Learning

ANNUAL REPORT 
Fiscal Year 2023

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To view the Report for the Office of Head Start, visit our website:
www.carolerobertsoncenter.org/office-of-head-start-annual-report/



LETTER From Our CEO & Board Chair



Dear Partners,

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning has experienced unprecedented growth and evolution over the past several years. As our reach has increased—in number of children and families served, communities touched, staff employed—so has our capacity to create **longstanding impact** in the communities we serve.

Through our growth, we have continued to build upon the commitments we've held for our nearly 50 years, and we remain rooted in uplifting the voices of those we serve through our mission.

In the pages that follow, you will hear directly from individuals positively impacted by the Center's mission and vision. Through their own words and stories, we hope you'll find a reflection of the Center's **community investments**—the *high-quality* early learning, youth development, and comprehensive support services that families have come to know and trust. We believe our sustained investments have the power to close the opportunity gap, support overall wellbeing, and yield **strong child, youth, and family outcomes**:

- **For children:** equitable opportunities for early care and learning so that all children can thrive in school and life, regardless of their zip code or background.
- **For youth:** academic support and enrichment through after-school programs, clubs, and summer camp to bolster their academic, social-emotional, and physical development.
- **For families:** programs for the youngest infants through the teenage years in 27 communities throughout Chicago so that families can choose a program model that best fits their needs, with holistic services to strengthen the whole family.
- **For our workforce:** professional development and sustainable career paths, competitive salaries, and retirement plans, because we know that our programs are only as effective as our staff is empowered.
- **For communities:** ways to amplify and broaden drivers of community change and solutions.

The impact of *good* program options like those the Center provides to children, youth, and families is **transformative**: School readiness becomes

a viable alternative to dropping out. Positive, trusted relationships with peers and adults help to prevent senseless neighborhood violence. Sustainable career pathways offer solutions to the economic inequities that keep families struggling. By staying true to our roots as a direct-service organization, we model what meaningful, systemic change can look like at the neighborhood level, while advocating for state and national policies that put families first.

Finding ourselves in a new landscape of impact and leadership, we are planning for the next phase of the Center's continuing evolution:

- **Investing** in capital improvements at our flagship sites in North Lawndale, Little Village, and Albany Park to create optimal environments for our children's learning, exploration, and enrichment.
- **Fueling** further research-informed innovations in our programs, so we can continue to most effectively respond to the changing needs of our communities.
- **Ensuring** that we can sustain our programs and operations at the highest levels of excellence regardless of conditions beyond our control (such as a pandemic).

We look forward to sharing more about these priorities and new initiatives with our community of supporters in the months and years ahead.

In the meantime, to our children and youth, families, staff, communities, donors, and partners—**thank you** for lending your voices of impact to make the work of the Center possible.

In gratitude,

Bela Moté
 PRESIDENT & CEO

Carter Culver
 BOARD CHAIR

Moments of **IMPACT**



AUGUST 2022

Center launches its annual 3-day Staff Education, Enrichment & Development (SEED) Conference

The SEED Conference, an evolution of the annual mandatory all-staff Professional Development Days event, reflects the tremendous growth of the Center and its workforce over the previous several years.



OCTOBER 2022

Center Gives Presentation on Grow Your Own Apprenticeship Model at Region 5 Head Start Conference

President & CEO Bela Moté and Chief Programs & Impact Officer Sonja Crum Knight present on the Center's innovative approach to addressing the workforce shortage in early childhood education and youth development.



DECEMBER 2022

Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) secures \$750,000 for Albany Park Flagship Site

Capital improvements to our Albany Park flagship site are included among the 10 projects Rep. Quigley secures funding for in the FY 2023 government funding package.



JANUARY 2023

Governor J.B. Pritzker Makes Smart Start Announcement at Center, Invites Grow Your Own Teacher to State of the State Address

Gov. Pritzker visits our Little Village flagship site to announce Smart Start Illinois, a groundbreaking expansion of the state's early childhood programs. Grow Your Own Apprentice and Teacher Aide Itanzia Dawson is featured in the Governor's "State of the State" address in Springfield the following month.



MARCH 2023

Out-of-School-Time Program Wins Jill Bradley Practice Award for Quality, Innovation

This award is given annually to an after-school program that exhibits programmatic excellence and innovation while serving as a model for all after-school and youth development programs.



MAY 2023

President & CEO Bela Moté Co-authors Paper on Opportunity Gap

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) releases a report titled Closing the Opportunity Gap for Young Children. Bela Moté lends her expertise as the paper's sole practitioner voice, bridging theory and practice.



MAY 2023

Out-of-School-Time Youth Compete in Destination Imagination Global Finals

Several Center youth travel to Kansas City to present at the international STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) competition that celebrates creativity and innovation.



JUNE 2023

Center is awarded Cook County Justice Advisory Council Gun Violence Prevention Grant

The Center receives a grant from the Cook County Government Justice Advisory Council as part of the County's Gun Violence and Reduction Grant Initiative. This funding enables us to expand our youth development programming in two North Lawndale schools.

VOICES Rising Together



EVERY VOICE MATTERS

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning's commitment to **uplifting community voices** dates back to our organization's founding.

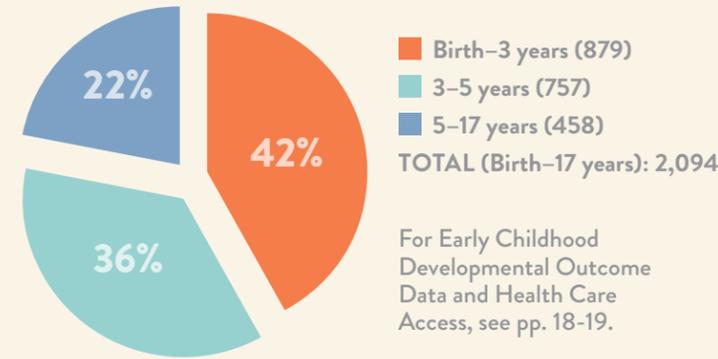
Our story begins in 1976, when families and residents of Chicago's Near West Side organized to save a beloved neighborhood after-school program. By speaking up for local children and youth, these community champions—alongside founder Maria Whelan—laid the foundation for what the Center would become.

Fast-forward nearly 50 years later, the Center's impact has grown tremendously—and the strength of our **collective voices** along with it.

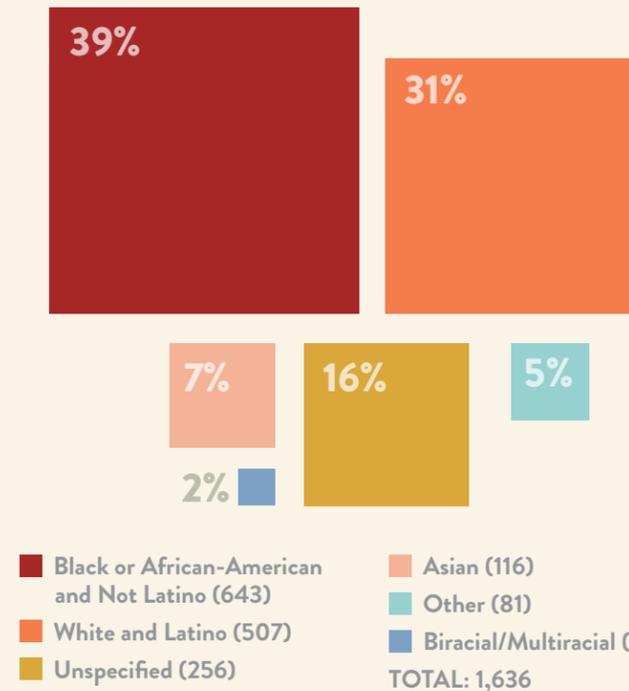
In this report, you'll hear from **children, youth, families, staff, providers, supporters, and advocates**, all sharing in their own words the mark the Center has made on them, their loved ones, their communities, and the education sector. You'll read about the work we're doing to make high-quality learning environments a reality for every child in Chicago and beyond. You'll learn about how investing in young learners positively impacts people of all ages. You'll see rich data on the ways we fulfill our mission to educate, enrich, and empower.

Every voice matters. Thank you for taking the time to listen to the community of voices that shape the Carole Robertson Center for Learning's vital work.

AGES OF CHILDREN SERVED, 2022-23

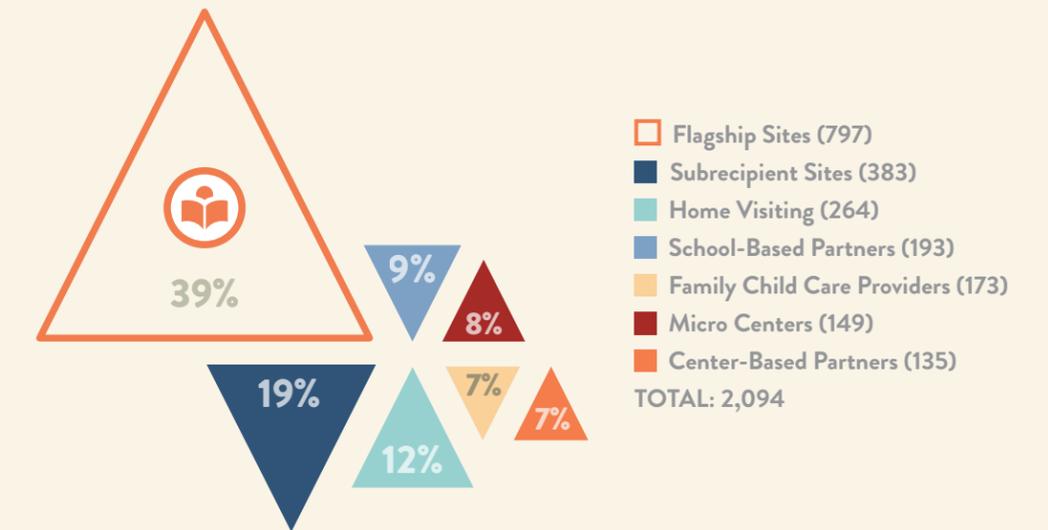
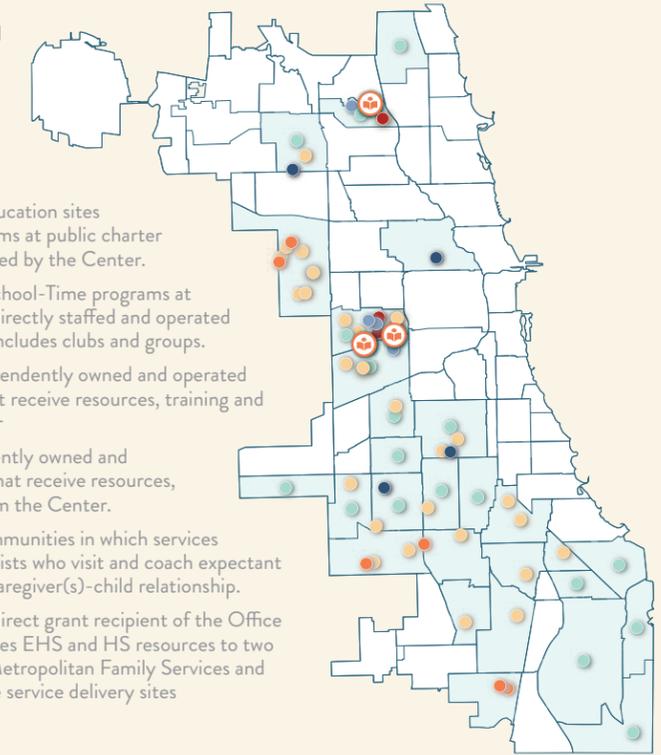


RACIAL & ETHNIC IDENTITY OF CHILDREN SERVED (0-5)



WHERE SERVICES WERE DELIVERED

- 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. Includes clubs and groups.
- 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.
- Subrecipient Organizations:** As a direct grant recipient 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).



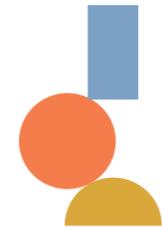
Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Emerging VOICES in Our Education Workforce



INVESTING
IN
GROWTH

Investing in Chicago's children and families means investing in the growth, development, and empowerment of our education workforce. At the Carole Robertson Center, our staff learn alongside the children and families we serve, creating an environment that encourages **collaboration** and **mentorship**. In fact, many of the Center's staff—including teachers, family support specialists, home visitors, and out-of-school-time mentors—started off as parents or engaged community members looking to chart a new path.



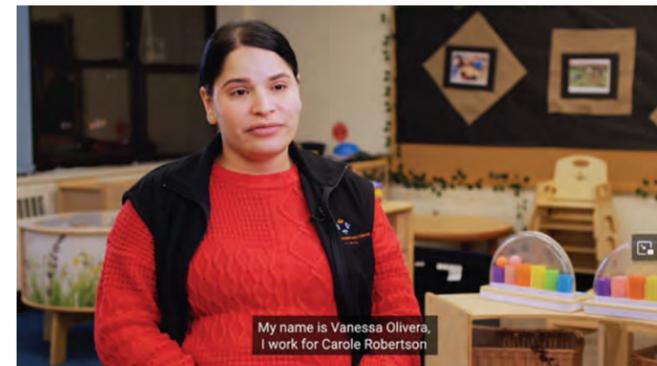
The Carole Robertson Center's **Grow Your Own Apprenticeship Model** exemplifies our community-centric approach. Launched formally in 2021 as a response to workforce shortages in early childhood education and a need for paths to economic mobility in our communities, Grow Your Own has since empowered dozens of Chicago residents to pursue careers in the field.

No matter what role they play or where they are in their careers, Center staff continue to grow through **professional development efforts** like conferences, workshops, data-driven quality assessments, and our annual Staff Education, Enrichment, and Development (SEED) Conference.

When North Lawndale Site Director Latonya Jones told me about the Grow Your Own Apprenticeship, I told her that I didn't have any experience in education. But she said that **I had the most important experience of all—as a parent**. She said I could start working as a parent teacher, and that to be a successful educator, I just had to be willing to grow and gain knowledge.

— AFFOUE NGUESSAN, TEACHER AIDE AND GROW YOUR OWN APPRENTICE

Hear the stories of two of our Grow Your Own Teacher Aides, Affoue Nguessan and Vanessa Olivera, from the testimonial videos linked below.



View videos on YouTube



@carolerobertsoncenterforle1583

100%

of the Center's Grow Your Own participants who have completed our Child Development Associate (CDA) cohort passed the exam to obtain their CDA, a professional credential for early childhood educators.

The national average is 15%.



69

teacher aides, home visitors and health aides hired through the Grow Your Own apprenticeship

108%

growth in Center staff from June 2020 to June 2023

JUNE 2023

322

155

JUNE 2020

Centering Families' VOICES



FOR FAMILIES,
BY FAMILIES,
WITH FAMILIES

At the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, “For families, by families, with families” isn’t just a catchphrase—it’s a core operating principle.

Since our founding in 1976, when parents organized to sustain an after-school program on Chicago’s Near West Side, local families have played a vital role in shaping not just who we serve, but how we serve.

Rooted in the belief that parents and guardians are a child’s first teachers, our approach to **family engagement** involves creating strong, culturally responsive support systems around every child.

As the needs of Chicago’s families evolve, so do we. With thousands of migrant families arriving in Chicago since late 2022, our Family Support team has mobilized to connect new arrivals with **vital resources** like food, rental assistance, and employment services. Meanwhile, our Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance (ERSEA) team works with families to get eligible children enrolled in our early education and youth development programs.

I found out about the Carole Robertson Center because I lived in the neighborhood and saw the traffic by the Little Village flagship site. As a mother, that made me wonder, “What makes this place so special?” I would soon find out. When registering my daughter Audrey for pre-K, **I witnessed firsthand the community-focused, family-centered environment that sets the Center apart.** When Audrey was experiencing developmental delays, the Center’s amazing teachers supported her with early intervention and therapeutic services while treating her with the dignity and respect they give every single child. Now, Audrey is a kindergarten student at Legacy Charter School. She’s continuing to develop and grow based on the foundation that the Carole Robertson Center set.

– SONYA MOORE, PAST CHAIR OF THE PARENT POLICY COUNCIL AND BOARD MEMBER, 2022-23



My family arrived in the United States from Venezuela in 2022. Soon after, we started at the Carole Robertson Center for Learning. Transitioning to a new environment with a new culture often brings challenges one is not expecting. My family received a lot of support from the Carole Robertson Center for Learning, as **they provided our family with the sense that my children were safe and cared for.** The Center supported my family through this challenging time by referring us to resources such as food pantries and mental health services and giving me the opportunity to invest in my career in early childhood.

– VANNESSA OLIVERA, PARENT, TEACHER AIDE, AND GROW YOUR OWN APPRENTICE

10K+
books provided
to families



2,009
goals set and
completed by
1,049 families
in collaboration
with the Family
Support team

4

Carole Robertson
Center Board
members are
current parents
or past program
participants.



Our Children's VOICES Matter



YOU MATTER

Building Children Up at Every Stage of Development

Chicago's **youngest learners** matter. From infants to school-aged youth, this tenet serves as the foundation for how the Carole Robertson Center for Learning operates our **early childhood education** and **youth development programs**.

Celebrating Diverse Voices through Cross-Cultural Literacy

At the earliest stages of development, we promote **cross-cultural literacy** by reading and distributing books representing the diversity of cultures that shape our city and world. As an organization serving predominantly Black and Brown children, it is our responsibility to ensure that, from infancy, children in our programs learn about people whose voices mirror their lived experiences. This initiative, spearheaded by the Center's **Social Justice & Equity committee**, fosters anti-bias principles and appreciation for cultural differences early in a child's life.



Our environments must send clear messages to our children, families and staff: This space is yours. You matter. You deserve environments that make you feel safe and nurtured. You deserve spaces that give you a sense of belonging.

—BELA MOTÉ, PRESIDENT & CEO

Promoting Healthy Relationships and Emotional Wellbeing

Our programs also emphasize **social-emotional learning (SEL)** at every stage of development. Our early education curriculum incorporates play-based activities that encourage healthy relationships with peers and teachers. The design of our classrooms also prioritizes children's social-emotional needs, with dedicated areas called "Calming Corners" that provide safe, sensory-friendly spaces for young learners to process their feelings or simply relax.

Creating Strong Support Systems for School Readiness

BASES-K (Bridging Academic and Social Emotional Supports into Kindergarten), our school readiness initiative, prepares children for school and life by connecting the dots between families, our early childhood education staff, and local elementary schools to create a fabric of support to envelop each child. Meanwhile, the **"Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for Life" Community Saturation Parenting Support initiative in North Lawndale**—a collaborative effort between the Center and Illinois Action for Children (IACF)—strengthens parent and guardian relationships through personalized counseling, coaching, and community outreach.

And students with unique needs aren't left behind: Through a pilot program with Chicago Public Schools, the Center offers **early intervention** for children experiencing developmental delays and other challenges, connecting them with special education services well before they enter the K-12 schooling system.

Empowering School-Aged Youth

For school-aged youth, the Center's **Out-of-School-Time (OST)** programs reinforce the same sense of belonging families come to know and trust through our early education offerings. From homework help to interest-based clubs—such as Lego engineering, robotics, art, tap dancing, and West African drumming—our OST programs empower youth to practice skills learned in school while creating avenues for self-expression.

PORTRAIT OF A PRE-KINDERGARTEN GRADUATE



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

FY23



135

FY21



85%

of families* feel their child is growing academically as a result of time spent in the Center's Out-of-School-Time program.

*among those who responded

Our Partners' VOICES



HANDS-ON SUPPORT

Community-Based Partners

The Carole Robertson Center supports a robust network of **community-based partners**, including 23 independent family child care providers and 5 small center-based programs, with **Head Start and Early Head Start funding, training, technical assistance**, and other **resources**. Partners receive hands-on support from the Center's community-based team, including family support and expert program advisors in child development and mental health, to uplift program quality and impact.

Our network of partners provide families with a broad footprint of **educational options** to choose from to ensure equity and access for all.

I started my partnership with the Carole Robertson Center for Learning in 2007 and I've grown as a provider and a business, too. I truly enjoy the program and especially the partnerships that I have built during my time with the Center.

— TOSHA RUSHTON, OWNER AND DIRECTOR, SERVING ALL FAMILIES EVERYWHERE (SAFE) 2, INC.



I was a parent who wouldn't allow any of my nine children to [receive care outside the home]. Eventually, I came across this establishment. The staff is pleasant, friendly, warm and welcoming. Through parent teacher conferences, I developed wonderful relationships with teachers. My son and daughter were taught sight words, writing, math, science, art, music, sign language, Spanish, and developed social skills essential for kindergarten readiness.

I loved the experience that my children and I had at this early learning facility and recommend it to everyone.

— LATORIA MARBURY, PARENT, SERVING ALL FAMILIES EVERYWHERE (SAFE) 2, INC.



28 early childhood community-based partners whose program quality and impact is enhanced by the Carole Robertson Center.

23 family child care providers

5 center-based programs

5 Out-of-School-Time School Partners

- Herzl School of Excellence
- Lawndale Community Academy
- Mary Gage Peterson Elementary
- Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy
- KIPP Ascend Primary



SAFE is a center-based partner of the Carole Robertson Center. Partners receive Head Start and Early Head Start funding, resources, training, and technical support to bolster high-quality early learning services.

Using Our VOICES to Champion Children & Families



SHARING STORIES

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning’s advocacy priorities are threefold:



From our annual participation in **Early Childhood Advocacy Day** to visits to Springfield and Washington, D.C., our **Community-Based Advocacy** initiatives drive systems change at the local, state, and federal levels by meaningfully engaging and uplifting those who know our work best: our workforce and the families and communities we serve.

By sharing stories of the Center’s impact and using our voices to help enact **policy and systems change**, we’re creating a more equitable early childhood and youth development landscape and fulfilling our founding promise to **advance social justice**.

The Center’s approach to advocacy is anchored in the voices and lived experiences of our dedicated workforce and the families we serve. Our staff and families are the heartbeat of the Carole Robertson Center, and their needs must be heard, understood, and amplified to make meaningful change.

– JULISSA CRUZ, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCACY



I used to be nervous speaking with lawmakers about issues affecting our families and communities. But every time we go to Springfield or D.C., our Community-Based Advocacy team brings a great group and provides well thought-out trainings on how to tell our stories. Now I feel empowered to share not only my lived experience but also how legislation and funding impact the community we’re serving.

– ANGEL MORALES, ELIGIBILITY, RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ENROLLMENT, AND ATTENDANCE (ERSEA) MANAGER

FY23 ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

Advocacy Committee launched

Voter registration and engagement campaigns during 2022 general election campaign season

Staff visit Washington, D.C., for Head Start Advocacy

Visits from several city, state, and federal elected officials to the Center

Parents and family child care providers delivered testimony before Illinois State Board of Education during legislative session 2023

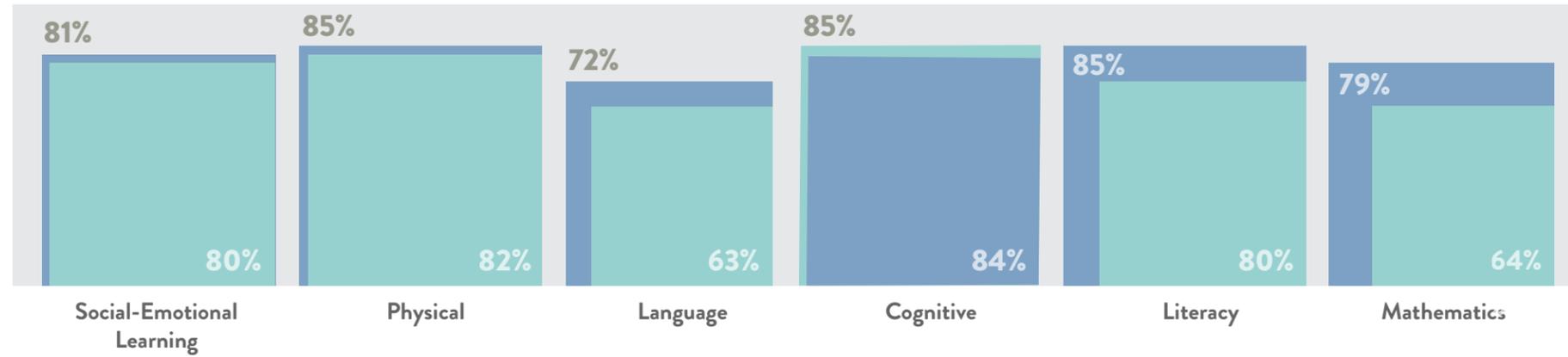
State Senator Ram Villivalam steers \$450,000 in state funds for capital improvements at the Albany Park flagship site

APPENDIX A

Early Childhood Education Developmental Outcomes Fall 2022 / Spring 2023

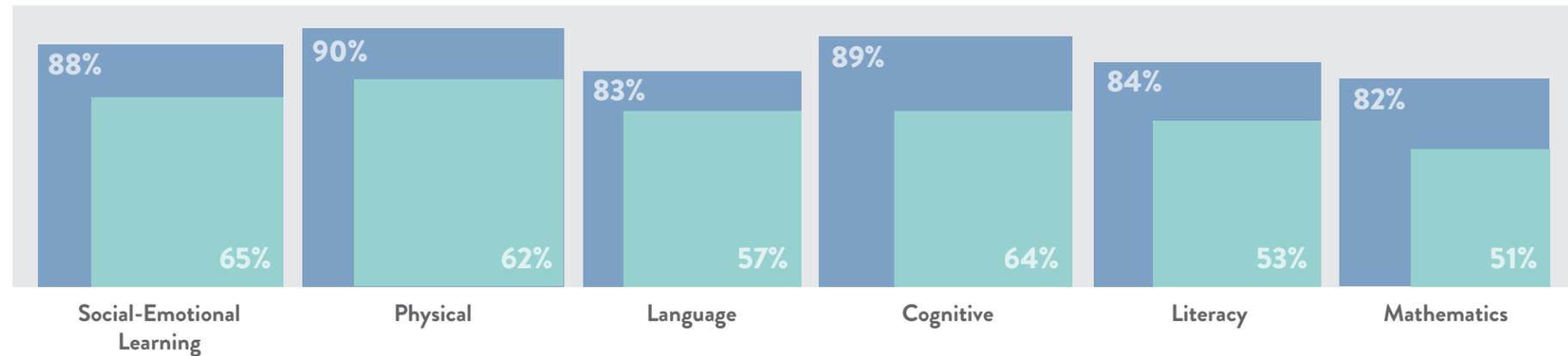
PERCENT OF CHILDREN 0-3 MEETING OR EXCEEDING DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS BY CONTENT AREA (not including subrecipients)

Fall 2022 | Spring 2023



PERCENT OF CHILDREN 3-5 MEETING OR EXCEEDING DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS BY CONTENT AREA (not including subrecipients)

Fall 2022 | Spring 2023



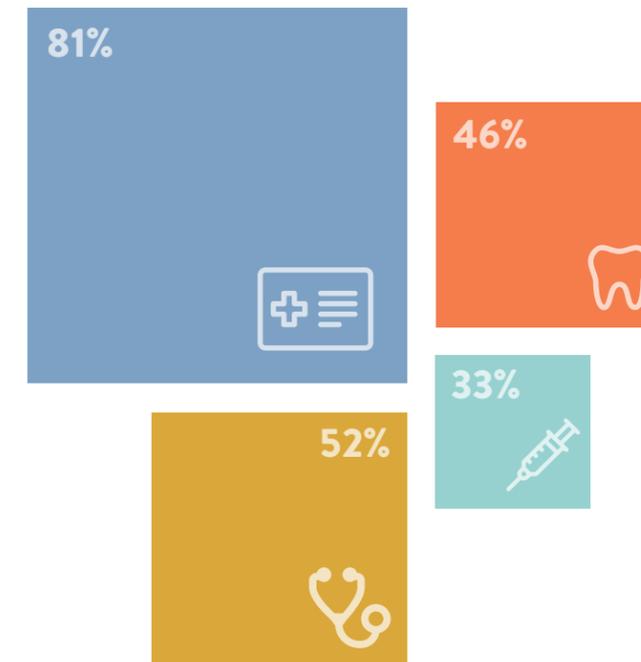
APPENDIX B

Health Care Access Fall 2022 / Spring 2023



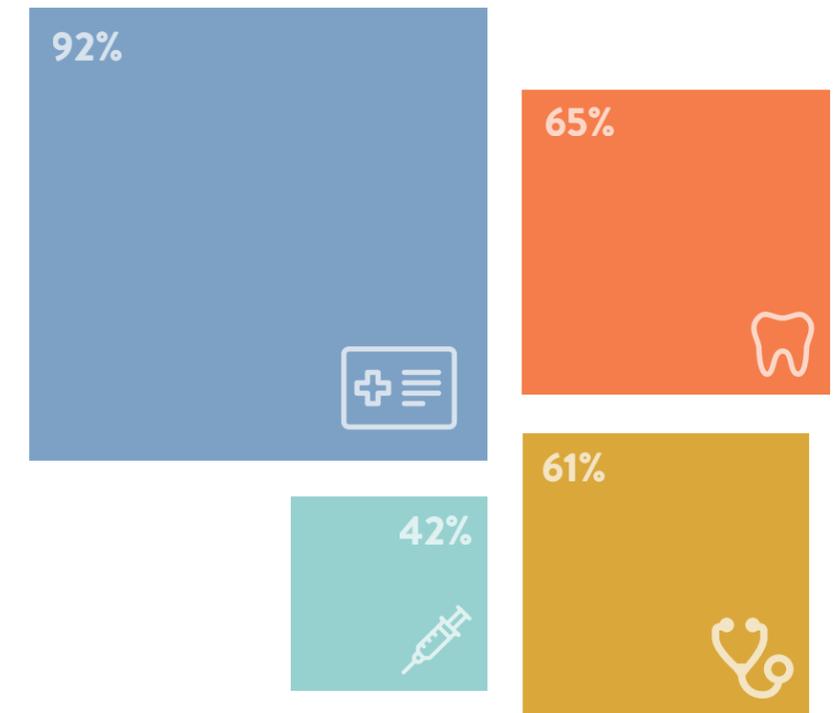
Our family support team partners with families to provide myriad supports, including facilitating access to medical and dental care for their children.

CHILDREN AGES 0-3 IN OUR ECE PROGRAMS WHO ACCESS VARIOUS TYPES OF CARE



■ Had health insurance
■ Had continuous accessible medical care
■ Had continuous dental care
■ Received all required immunizations

CHILDREN AGES 3-5 IN OUR ECE PROGRAMS WHO ACCESS VARIOUS TYPES OF CARE



■ Had health insurance
■ Had continuous accessible medical care
■ Had continuous dental care
■ Received all required immunizations

FINANCIALS

Fiscal year ending June 30, 2023
(Audited Financial Statement Extracts)



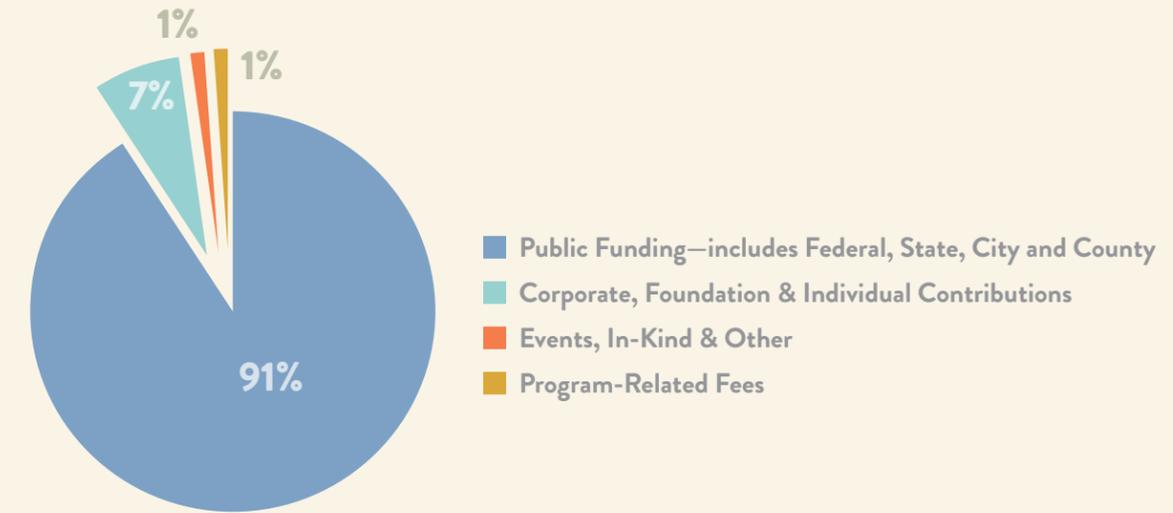
ASSETS

CURRENT ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$2,138,188
Investments	\$4,782,789
Receivables (All)	\$6,987,054
Prepaid expenses	\$407,737
Total current assets	\$14,315,768
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	
Land	\$1,800,000
Facility	\$7,368,716
Other property and equipment	\$665,213
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(\$5,480,783)
Net property and equipment	\$4,353,146
Other Assets	\$ 852,417
Total Assets	\$19,521,331

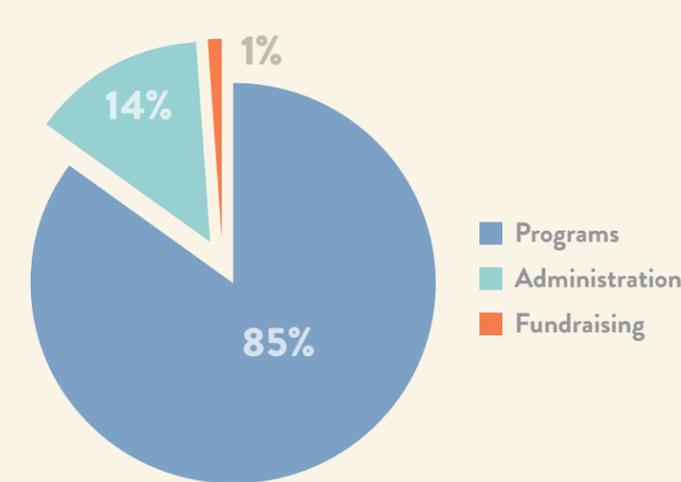
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable	\$1,508,284
Accrued expenses	\$1,825,943
Current portion of capital leases	\$138,865
Total current liabilities	\$3,473,092
NONCURRENT LIABILITIES	
Noncurrent portion of capital leases	\$600,400
Total noncurrent liabilities	\$600,400
Total liabilities	\$4,073,492
NET ASSETS	
Without donor restrictions	\$12,417,235
With donor restrictions	\$3,030,604
Total net assets	\$15,447,839
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$19,521,331

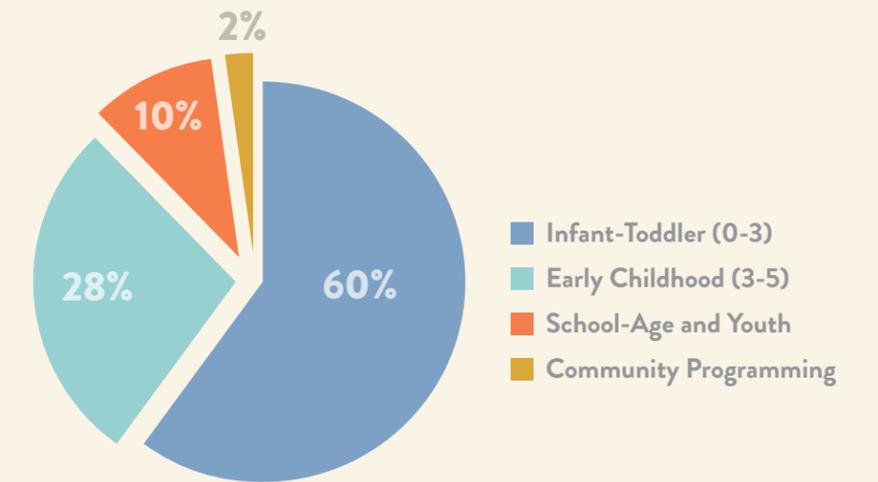
REVENUE BY CATEGORY



EXPENSES BY CATEGORY



BREAKDOWN OF PROGRAM EXPENSES BY TYPE



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As of April 2024



Carter Culver
Chair



John Blasi
ACCENTURE

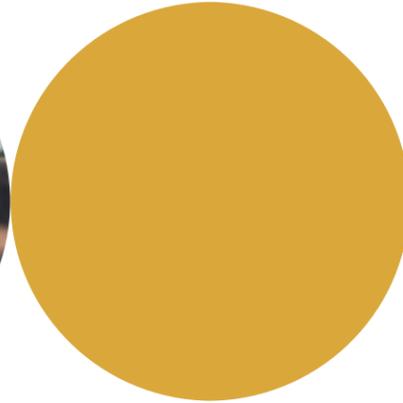


Paul Foley
VISIBLY



Stefanie Kruse Curley

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

Dave Robertson
PMC TREASURY



John Smith
ACH FOOD COMPANIES, INC.

Joanne Steinback

Rani Williams
UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS HEALTH



Jamellah Braddock Ellis
Honorary Robertson
Family Representative

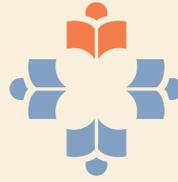
**Dianne Robertson
Braddock**
Honorary Robertson
Family Representative



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.

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

CaroleRobertsonCenter.org

