

**COMMUNITY
REPORT**
2021-2022



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DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

We are excited to take this opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the successes of Mile High Early Learning’s 2021-2022 academic year. The pages in this report allow us to share details about the children and families served during the year who are at the heart of our mission. Our children and community continue to thrive because of the support of friends and supporters like you, and generations of children continue to benefit from our program.



This past year marked a very special occasion and monumental milestone – MHEL’s 50th anniversary! As we look back over our first half century, we are in awe of the number of people impacted by this organization:

- **500,000** children received high quality early care and education
- **750,000** nutritious meals and snacks were prepared for our children
- **500** early childhood teachers completed their Child Development Associate certificate
- **300** Family, Friend, and Neighbor caregivers received training.

During this year of celebrating our 50th anniversary, MHEL also began to envision what is possible for the next 50 years. The 2021-2022 academic year provided an opportunity to chart our next chapter and engage in strategic planning.

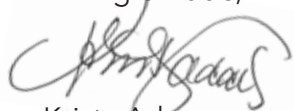
MHEL embarked on a process that engaged families, the entire staff, a strategic planning committee, our Board of Directors, and key stakeholders to share their thoughts and dreams for MHEL. This inclusive, nine-month process resulted in a strategic vision and framework designed to guide the organization over the next three years.

We are implementing three strategic initiatives to advance our work: Program Excellence, Workforce Enhancement, and Community Building. We believe that by focusing on these initiatives, we will see a dynamic community of thoughtful, engaged, and innovative individuals who foster diversity and empower children, families, and staff to thrive and share in the lifelong learning journey.



The MHEL team is working hard in support of our mission to ensure all children thrive by cultivating every child’s potential, engaging families, and championing our early learning workforce. We are grateful for and humbled by your continued support of this important work.

With gratitude,



Kristy Adams
Board of Directors Chair



Pamela Harris, PhD
President & CEO

PROGRAM OVERVIEW 2021-2022

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVED

- **31%** of children in Denver eligible for Head Start/Early Head Start were served
- **100%** – average monthly enrollment of Head Start/Early Head Start children
- **634** infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in our early learning centers
- **Early Head Start/Child Care and Head Start Partnerships** - Ability Connection Colorado, Florence Crittenton Services, Hope Center, KIPP Sunshine Peak Elementary, Little Folks Learning Center, Little Ones Learning Center, New Legacy Charter School, Sewall Child Development Center, Smart Learning Academy, Sunshine Academy, and Warren Village.

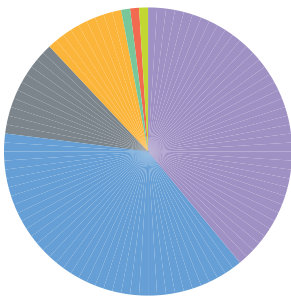


About our Children, Families, and Staff

- **92%** of families were living at or below the federal poverty level (\$34,688 for a family of four), and 34 families experienced homelessness.
- 25% of MHEL families are immigrants or refugees. **Families come from 18 different countries and speak over 30 different languages;** 38% speak a primary language other than English.
- 72% of families were **one-parent households**.
- 79% of children’s **parents/guardians were working or attending school**.

Student diversity

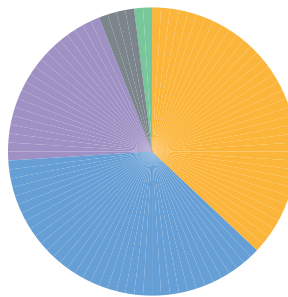
(634 enrolled)



African-American	39%
AAPI	1%
Hispanic	38%
Middle Eastern	1%
Multi-racial	11%
Native American	1%
White	9%

Staff diversity

(150+ employees)



African-American	20%
AAPI	2%
Hispanic	37%
Multi-racial	4%
White	37%

Child Outcomes

- **97% of our children met or exceeded the widely held expectations for cognitive development and physical development** as measured by My Teaching Strategies; 98% of children met or exceeded expectations for literacy and math; 96% of children met or exceeded expectations for language; and 95% met or exceeded expectations for social-emotional development.
- **100% of children demonstrated growth** and made steady improvement.
- **100% of children received early intervention screenings**; 58 children were identified as having special needs and received services through an Individualized Education Plan or Individualized Family Service Plan.
- **100% of children** had a medical home and health insurance and were current on immunizations and physicals.
- **90% of children had continuous, accessible dental care**; 82% received preventive care.

Family Outcomes

- **96% of families found the program helpful** to their children and like the Montessori Inspired approach
- **92% know how to be involved in and support** their child's education
- **58% of families participated** in parenting education programs
- **35% of parents received health education**



Program Outcomes:

- **All early learning centers are rated a Level 4 on Colorado Shines**, the Quality Rating and Improvement System, in recognition of the high quality of programming provided.
- **MHEL uses the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)** to measure the quality of teacher interactions with children which showed growth in all domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.
- **MHEL preschool classrooms met or exceeded the National Head Start average for Instructional Support**, which focuses on higher order thinking skills, cognition, and expanding learning. The Instructional Support domain encourages children's participation in learning with a focus on language stimulation and language facilitation (including using advanced vocabulary, a variety of words, and open-ended questions).
- In the spring of 2022, scores for Instructional Support in four of our preschool classrooms were **greater than the Head Start national average** (4.58, 4.41, 4.16, and 3.92 - compared to the national average of 3.88).
- Infant classroom **CLASS scores for Responsive Caregiving increased** (on average) from 5.67 in the fall of 2021 to 6.35 in the spring of 2022. Toddler classroom CLASS scores for Engaged Support for Learning increased (on average) from 3.88 in the fall of 2021 to 4.53 in the spring of 2022.
- **Mile High Early Learning completed the full cycle of monitoring events** under the Office of Head Start's aligned monitoring system for the current project period for Head Start and Early Head Start. The program was found to have no deficiencies, and at the time of the final review, all areas were compliant.

WORKFORCE ENHANCEMENT

Mile High Early Learning provided professional development opportunities to more than 300 early learning professionals at MHEL and community programs through its Professional Learning Center.

In addition to a job-embedded coaching model and professional learning, our **Professional Learning Center** offers continuing education programs for MHEL educators and educators who work at our Head Start and Early Head Start partner sites and other early childhood programs in Denver.

Our **Child Development Associate (CDA)** training program focuses on those who are beginning their career in early childhood and wish to earn their CDA credential.

This past year, 182 educators participated in the CDA, including 9 MHEL staff. Most participants work at other early childhood programs in Denver. This past year was the third year that MHEL offered its CDA training program fully online as we continue to make the program more accessible. Participants meet weekly via Zoom with their instructor and other members of their CDA cohort.

Six of our **Babies Ready for College (BRFC)** interns participated in the CDA training program this past year. BRFC interns help facilitate BRFC, our community-based training program for parents and informal caregivers, also known as **Family, Friend, & Neighbor** caregivers. Our interns now have a wealth of knowledge and experience in early care and education and will be able to further their careers in early childhood because of their participation in the CDA training program.

Based on a recent survey of CDA participants from the past three years, 65% of participants went on to obtain degrees or certifications and 94% are still working in the early childhood education field.

MHEL continues to partner with **University of Colorado Denver (UCD)** to offer the place-based BA program to educators. Five MHEL teachers participated in the BA program this past year. Within this program, students participate in courses that are embedded in their workplaces while also receiving coaching from an advisor. Four MHEL teachers took graduate level classes this past year. MHEL provides tuition support to staff who are interested in continuing their education.

Our teachers continue to receive:

- **90+ professional development hours** - including two weeklong Professional Development Institutes
- **30+ hours of intensive coaching**
- **Financial support** to pursue early childhood degrees



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Babies Ready for College

MHEL provides training for Family, Friend, & Neighbor caregivers through Babies Ready for College (BRFC), which provides caregivers of young children with vital information about how children’s brains grow and ways to facilitate that growth so their children will succeed in school.

This past year, 487 parents, caregivers, and children participated in BRFC programs, which include Short & Sweet Book Clubs and Play & Learn Groups. 95% of caregivers reported an increase in knowledge and decrease in stress.

MHEL worked with Gary Community Ventures and Analytica Insights, LLC to evaluate one of our BRFC programs, Short & Sweet Book Clubs, during the first quarter of 2022. Participants shared that they are more engaged in supporting their children’s literacy development because of the program. Over 95% of caregivers reported reading with their children at home; and over 90% agreed that the program has increased their child’s vocabulary, knowledge of letters, interest in reading, school readiness, and school performance.

Student Profile



Daniel is a preschooler at MHEL’s Westwood center and has attended Westwood since he was an infant. His teachers share that they have observed a significant amount of growth in Daniel over the past year—he is exceeding

expectations for social-emotional and cognitive development, language, literacy, and math. Daniel recently started wearing glasses and is very responsible with them and takes care not to break or lose them. His teachers and mother are thrilled that he is ready to transition to kindergarten in the fall of 2023.

Family Profile

Irene, a very hardworking single mother born in Ghana, was excited to have her middle child, Miracle, attend Lowry Early Learning Center. Irene’s older son attended Lowry and is currently in first grade. According to Irene, “he is doing such an amazing job due to the great teachers at MHEL who contributed greatly to his success!”



Irene is currently working full-time as a nursing assistant while also pursuing her master’s degree. She represents Lowry on MHEL’s Head Start Policy Committee. She is extremely passionate about providing children with a quality education and is always willing to assist our staff and other parents when she can: “I believe quality childhood education sets children up for a great future. The teachers and staff do an exceptional job at Lowry Early Learning Center to ensure every child is well taken care of.”

Irene is thrilled that Miracle had a great school year just like his brother! His teachers shared that Miracle would regularly check on his classmates who appeared upset and offer toys or hugs to help them feel better. Miracle is also a singer—singing loudly during circle time and singing to himself during work cycle time! Miracle built strong relationships with his classmates and teachers and his teachers are excited to watch him grow.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

STEM Learning

- During the 2021-22 school year, **MHEL developed an enhanced STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) curriculum** to support STEM learning in our early childhood classrooms.
- Intensive **STEM training for teachers took place during our weeklong Professional Development Institute** in the spring of 2022 and included a focus on the STEM classroom environment, constructivist and inquiry-based classroom experiences, and teacher language and behaviors supporting inquiry and scientific thinking in children.
- As a result of this year-long process, we see that **more children are exploring and investigating scientific concepts**, observing how things work, and conducting experiments to learn about the world around them.



Preparing for Kindergarten at Lowry

- At our Lowry Center this summer, kindergarten-bound children had the opportunity to come out of their usual preschool classrooms and **spend time in a STEM or art lab**. This is a time when our oldest children can prepare for their impending kindergarten transition with smaller group sizes and intentional experiences geared toward STEM and artwork.
- In these labs, **children engage in sensory play, loose part play, literacy-embedded studio art, and much more**, all while diving deeper into their individual interests. The kinder-bound children at Lowry have loved working so closely with Ms. Madison and Ms. Caitlin this summer!

50th Anniversary open house



Board Chair Kristy Adams and President Dr. Pamela Harris



Former Board Chair Elmo Morales, Board Vice President Emeritus Denny Dahl, Pat and Jill McNellis, Community Leadership Board (CLB) members



Laura Barton, CLB member, Andra Brill (with daughter Emily), Ilse Nathan Foundation

OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In 1972, Mile High Early Learning began as a group of community leaders who came together to explore options for single mothers who wanted to work and needed child care.

Several agencies joined together to form Metro Denver Child Care to provide affordable, accessible, quality early childhood care and education for children of low income working parents. Funding from the programs came from the U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development and Denver Department of Human Services. Mile High United Way provided additional funding and the organization became Mile High Child Care.



On March 9, 2022, we hosted an open house at our new headquarters on Speer Boulevard for some of our current and former Board Members and longtime supporters. Several individuals recorded video testimonials and shared stories about how they came to be involved in the work at Mile High. Go to our website to view!



Susan Steele, Buell Foundation, Khadija Haynes, Cindy Kahn, CLB member, Elsa Holguin, Denver Preschool Program, Anna Jo Haynes, President Emeritus, Mary Haynes, LeAnn Haynes.

M I L E S T O N E S



1972: Denver-area providers, with support from **Mile High United Way**, established **Mile High Child Care** to provide child care for working families with limited incomes.

1972-78: We supported 200 family child care home providers with training and **Toy Lending Libraries**.

1972: **Lion's Club of Denver** partnered with Mile High Child Care to operate Rude Park Community Nursery.

1981: **Infant and toddler care** were added to the services provided for families.

1990: Mile High Child Care launched a collaborative federal research project—data gathered from the project helped establish **Early Head Start** in 1995.

1997: Mile High Child Care became a **Head Start provider** with the City and County of Denver.



2003: Mile High Child Care becomes **Mile High Montessori Early Learning Centers**—using research-based practices introduced by Maria Montessori.

2006: Our **Community Leadership Board** comprised of prominent community leaders was created to expand our reach and impact.

2013: Launched **Babies Ready for College** in partnership with The Piton Foundation.

2013: Created a **Professional Learning Center** for coaching, a Child Development Associate program, and an MA in Learning, Developmental and Family Sciences.

2016: We renamed as **Mile High Early Learning/ Montessori Inspired** to reflect the growing number of services provided and our educational philosophy.

2018: **Denver Mayor Michael Hancock** renamed one of our centers in honor of President Emeritus Anna Jo Garcia Haynes.

2020: We invested in a new building with **space and technology** for training and professional development.

2021: Mile High Early Learning became a **Head Start grantee**, extending our child care partnerships in the community.

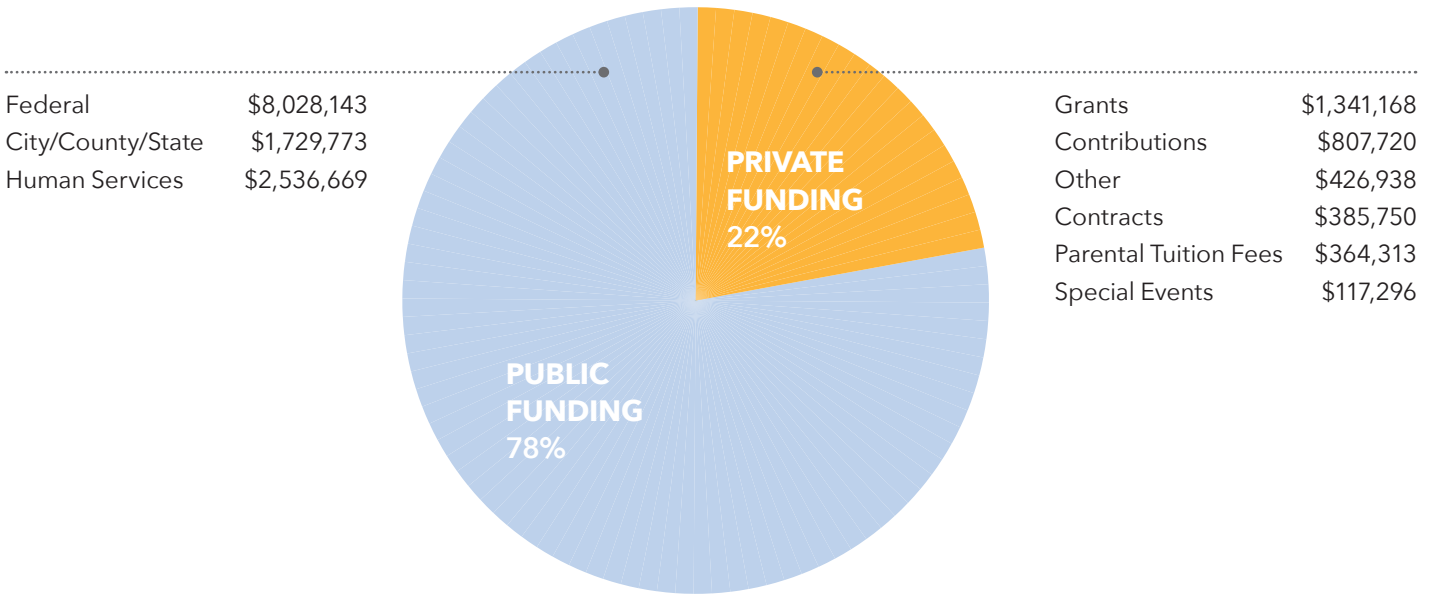
2021: Mile High Early Learning is awarded the inaugural state-wide **The Succeeds Prize in Early Childhood Education**.

2022: Mile High Early Learning continues to **eliminate opportunity gaps for underserved** and under-resourced families.

FINANCIAL PROFILE: FY 2021-2022

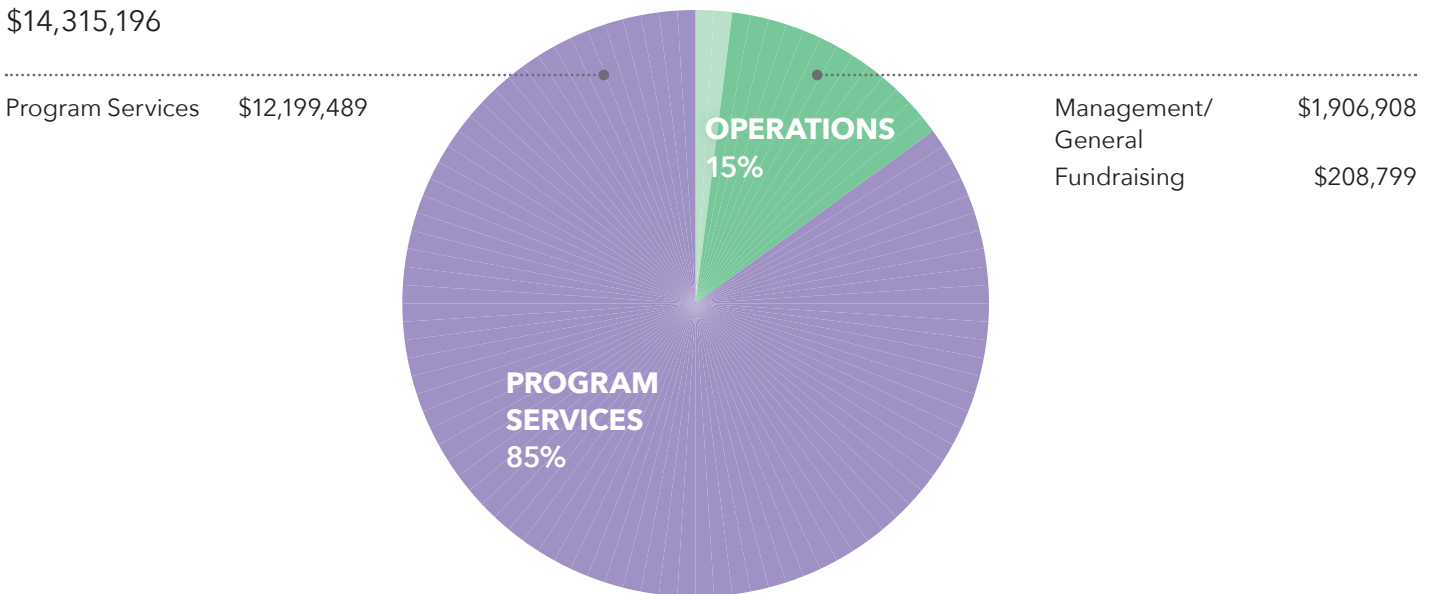
MHEL REVENUE AND SUPPORT

\$15,737,770



MHEL EXPENSES

\$14,315,196



Mile High Early Learning's 2021-22 financial audit received an unmodified clean opinion, noting no material weaknesses, non-compliance, or findings. Annual budget and audited financial statements available upon request.

2021-2022 DONORS & VOLUNTEERS

We gratefully acknowledge the following companies, civic groups, foundations, and individuals for giving their resources so generously.

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STONE SOUP 2022

On the morning of June 23, 2022, Mile High Early Learning hosted its 8th Annual Stone Soup Breakfast at Denver Botanic Gardens.

This annual fundraising event brings together early childhood leaders and partners, business leaders, donors, and other members of the community. Each year we look forward to this event as an opportunity to share the impact of our work and tell the stories of our children, families, and educators.

Our 2022 event was a celebration of Mile High Early Learning's 50th Anniversary. Attendees and speakers included Mile High Early Learning children (past and present) and their parents: Erin Burge and her son Luke; Stacia Harris-Shorts and her son Solomon; Mikayla Martinez and her son Oliver; and Rita Gonzales, whose children and grandchildren participated in our program.

Delfina Jackson, a Mile High Early Learning parent, also attended with her children and shared about the impact of Mile High Early Learning's program on her family. Delfina recognized and thanked the teachers and staff who continue to support her youngest child.

Our 2022 Stone Soup event included remarks from local wellness champion Bianca Mikahn who spoke about the importance of cultivating our children's wellbeing.

Because of the generosity of our friends and partners who attended and sponsored the event, we exceeded our fundraising goal and raised over \$140,000 in support of initiatives from our new strategic framework including expanding our Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood training program; continuing to provide training for staff on trauma-informed care and culturally responsive practices with an equity lens; and supporting our early childhood workforce.



Olivia Pringle and parent Delfina Jackson

Parent Stacia Harris-Shorts and Solomon Shorts



President Dr. Pamela Harris, President Emeritus Anna Jo Garcia Haynes, Bianca Mikahn, Check Your Head






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