

**COMMUNITY  
REPORT**  
2022-2023



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## DEAR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS

We had a fantastic 2022-2023 academic year at Mile High Early Learning! We are especially excited about our work to operationalize Mile High Early Learning's new strategic framework and implement our three strategic initiatives – Program Excellence, Workforce Enhancement, and Community Building.

These initiatives were developed with input from our families, staff, and community stakeholders and designed to help Mile High Early Learning achieve its mission to ensure all children thrive by cultivating every child's potential, engaging families, and championing our early learning workforce.

1. **Program Excellence:** Families have increased access to health and mental health services through investments in staffing. Each center has dedicated behavior support specialists and disabilities/mental health specialists who work closely with teachers and families to support children. We also now have a dedicated health specialist who supports families in accessing critical services before their children enroll.

- **92% of our preschool children met or exceeded expectations for physical development and 91% met or exceeded expectations for social-emotional development and language.**

We are focused on bringing high-quality early care and education to more underserved children and families in Denver and have worked diligently over the past year to plan for the opening of our three new early learning centers in partnership with Mercy Housing, Lifespan Local, and Mile High United Way. These new early learning centers will open during the 2023-2024 academic year and will create 160 more early childhood slots in child care deserts.

2. **Workforce Enhancement:** We are committed to ensuring that our workforce has a livable wage and have increased wages for early educators for the second year in a row. **All lead teachers with a BA in Early Childhood Education are paid \$55,000 annually.**

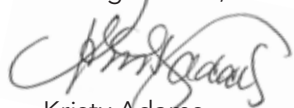
We continue to grow the early childhood workforce through our Child Development Associate (CDA) training program that helps educators earn the foundational credential for working in our classrooms. 157 educators participated in our CDA training program this past year.

3. **Community Building:** To strengthen the school-to-home connection, we began engaging families through Seesaw, an interactive learning platform that helps families continue their child's learning at home and connect with other families to build community and learn together. **90% of our families reported feeling more equipped to be lifelong learners and as well as an improvement in the parent-child relationship** as a result of our comprehensive early learning program.

This past year was also a time for celebrating our partnerships with community child care providers to reach underserved communities. MHEL began working with one of our partners, Little Folks Learning Center, in 2019. Since that time, owner Sabah Omer has been able to open two additional early learning centers to serve more immigrant and refugee families. Sabah started with just 10 children and now serves 70!

These successes would not be possible without you. Thank you for your continued support and for being a partner in this important work to help our most under-resourced children and families thrive.

With gratitude,



Kristy Adams  
Board of Directors Chair



Pamela Harris, PhD  
President & CEO

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVED

- **782** infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in our early learning centers
- MHEL and other Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Denver collectively serve approximately **31% of the eligible population**
- **100%** – average monthly enrollment of Head Start/Early Head Start children



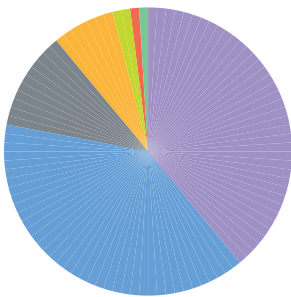
## Early Head Start/Child Care and Head Start Partnerships:

1. Ability Connection Colorado
2. Academy 360
3. Devyne Scholars
4. Florence Crittenton
5. Hope Center
6. KIPP Sunshine Peak Elementary
7. Little Folks Learning Center
8. Little Spark Learning Center
9. New Legacy Charter School
10. Sewall Child Development Center
11. Smart Learning Academy
12. Sunshine Academy
13. Warren Village

## About our Children, Families, and Staff

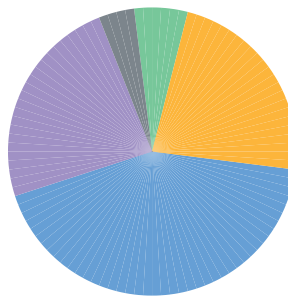
- **92%** of families were living at or below the **federal poverty level** (\$30,000 for a family of four)
- **52 families** experienced homelessness.
- 21% of MHEL families are immigrants or refugees. **Families come from 18 different countries and speak over 30 different languages;** 37% speak a primary language other than English
- 64% of families are **single-parent households**
- 63% of children’s **parents/guardians were working and 13% attended school**

## Student diversity (782 enrolled)



African-American	39%
AAPI	1%
Hispanic	39%
Middle Eastern	1%
Multi-racial	11%
Native American	2%
White	7%

## Staff diversity (150+ employees)



African-American	24%
AAPI	6%
Hispanic	43%
Multi-racial	4%
White	23%

## Child Outcomes

- **89% of children (average of all children served) met or exceeded the widely held expectations for cognitive development** as measured by My Teaching Strategies
- **88% of children met or exceeded expectations for physical development**
- **86% met or exceeded expectations for social-emotional development and literacy**
- **100% of children demonstrated growth** and made steady improvement during the school year
- **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, health insurance, and were current on immunizations and physicals.
- **96% of children had continuous, accessible dental care;** 85% received preventive care.

## Preschoolers transitioning to kindergarten

- **92%** met or exceeded expectations for **physical development**
- **91%** met or exceeded expectations for **social-emotional development and language**



## Family Outcomes

- **96%** of families received support to meet basic needs: food, clothing, housing, etc.
- **96%** of families participated in parenting education programs
- **58%** received health and nutrition education
- **43%** received assistance with enrolling into an education or job training program
- **93%** of families found the program helpful to their family's well-being
- **90%** of our families reported feeling more equipped to be lifelong learners as well as an improvement in the parent-child relationship
- **92%** of families felt more connected to their community

## Program Outcomes:

MHEL 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.

The quality of teacher/child interactions showed growth in all domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support—as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

- Fall 2022 CLASS data show that teachers exceeded the national Head Start average for Instructional Support (3.48 for MHEL teachers compared to the national average of 2.94).

Mile High Early Learning has 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.

## FAMILY AND STUDENT PROFILES

**Madison**, a single mom and full-time student, is working to provide a bright future for her sons. Her 3-year-old son, David, attends Mile High Early Learning's Northeast Early Learning Center, where our Montessori-inspired education helps him grow and thrive.

Beyond a high-quality education for David, Madison's family receives connections to resources for food, clothing, diapers, and cultural experiences.

Madison is confident that every day her son is safe and genuinely cared for.

"It's been an incredible experience...He's given opportunities for education and creativity - the things he needs as he grows," Madison said.

**Sebastian** is a preschooler at Mile High Early Learning's Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Learning Center and has been attending since 2020, when he joined the infant classroom.

He is very soft spoken but will stand up for himself. Sebastian loves magni-tiles, rocks, and playing with cars and others. He always enters the classroom happy and ready to greet his friends with hugs and hellos.

Sebastian has four siblings, including a 3-month-old brother. His mother, Nastaszia, is a single parent and works hard at her job as an office operations specialist to provide for her family. She is a caring, outgoing, and supportive mother and always greets everyone with her sweet presence and a big smile. Nastaszia communicates regularly with teachers and staff and is very involved in Sebastian's education.

**"I come from a background of generational poverty, and I'm trying to end that in my family,"**

*Madison, Parent*

*Madison and David at Northeast Early Learning Center.*



*Sebastian at Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Learning Center.*



## FAMILY FEATURE

**“At Mile High, there’s no judgment. There’s no class difference there. We’re all the same. People deserve that. No kid should ever feel any different.”**

**Yuki Karki**—a single mother of two students at the Lowry Early Learning Center—also quickly shares how vital the Mile High staff is to her peace of mind. “My kids love it and are happy to go to school,” she says. “I trust Mile High. I always know that my kids are safe there.”

It’s the peace of mind that 29-year-old Yuki pursues as her life comes together. Arriving with her family from their native Nepal in the U.S. as a teen, Yuki spent her early years in the states in northern Virginia. By 2018, she found herself living in Denver with friends on her own with her three children following a failed relationship with their father.

Once she landed a job at Denver’s courthouse, Yuki began looking for a stable place for her family to live. That’s when she met Miranda Al-Mouradi with Mile High’s Family Services, who helped her find an apartment for her family in Lowry. Says Yuki, “They’re very welcoming there. It’s not just safe for children. It’s safe for parents, too.”

Since her first encounter with the Family Services team, Yuki has grown to appreciate the ongoing support, particularly from Ms. Dee and Ms. Ashley, seeing it as an invaluable part of her life. “The family group sends emails weekly, which is so helpful with information. I learn so much from them.” She adds, “They’re like a one-stop shop.”

Fast forward to 2023, Yuki is parenting four children, ages 2 to 7. Her mother, who now lives with them, supports raising her children while the fathers of her kids provide her with occasional breaks.

Those moments during breaks allow her to continue her full-time studies at the University of Colorado Denver, where she is two semesters away from a degree in economics while also juggling work study.

For Yuki Karki, total peace of mind is close.

**“They’re very welcoming there. It’s not just safe for children. It’s safe for parents, too”**

*Yuki Karki MHEL Parent*



*Yuki Karki at the 2023 Stone Soup Breakfast.*

## 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.

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

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

### Child Development Associate (CDA)

Our CDA training program focuses on those who are beginning their career in early childhood and wish to earn this foundational credential.

This past year, 157 educators participated in the CDA, including 12 MHEL staff. Most participants work at other early childhood programs in Metro Denver. This past year was the fourth 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.

### Place-Based BA

MHEL continues to partner with University of Colorado Denver 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.



**Heather Pischel** (photo), Program Director at MHEL's Rude Park Early Learning Center, spoke at Stone Soup 2023 about her experience as a student in the

place-based BA program. As a teen mom, Heather enrolled in the early childhood education training program offered by TANF, which eventually led her to a substitute teacher position at Rude Park. Twenty years and several promotions later, Heather is on track to achieve her goal of earning a BA in Early Childhood Education. According to Heather, "Families know I also started at the bottom and worked my way up. So, when I hear their struggles, I can be their cheerleader."

### Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood

To help educators who want to be more prepared to meet the care and learning needs of children with challenging behaviors and special learning needs, we expanded our Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood (IPEC) training program. IPEC provides early educators with the knowledge and skills to successfully work with children whose behaviors are challenging to adults.

We created a new foundational course – IPEC: Foundations – to serve as a prerequisite for the full IPEC Credential. This 10-hour, self-paced, online course provides educators with foundational tools and resources to create high quality learning environments to support all children. 25 MHEL educators participated in our inaugural IPEC Foundations training and are on track to receive the IPEC credential plus eight college credits in Special Education from University of Colorado Denver that may be applied towards a BA degree.



## PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

From June 26 - 28, 2023, the Office of Head Start conducted a Focus Area 1 monitoring review of our program, and we are thrilled that MHEL received a glowing review!

Our report from the Office of Head Start highlighted several areas of focus at MHEL that positively impact children, families, and staff.

1. Our work to foster diversity, belonging, and inclusion and to promote a safe and equitable environment for children, families, and staff. We do this through our focus on Race & Equity, professional development/training on trauma-informed care with an equity lens, affinity and allyship groups, and other special projects.
2. The Child Development Associate training program that helps educators earn the foundational credential for working in our classrooms, as well as other continuing education programs that help teachers meet qualification requirements and further their careers.
3. Responsive health services, including our partnerships with health providers to deliver virtual pediatric health care for children at centers and a dedicated health team that works closely with nurses and families when illnesses and accidents occur.
4. Family engagement and communication through home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and SeeSaw, which allows parents to connect to resources and get information about their child's classroom and center.

## New Early Learning Centers

We are expanding our program to serve more underserved children and families in Denver and have worked diligently over the past year to plan for the opening of our three new early learning centers in partnership with Mercy Housing, Lifespan Local, and Mile High United Way. These new early learning centers will open during the 2023-2024 academic year and will create 160 more early childhood slots in child care deserts.

Our center at the **Rose on Colfax** will open in the fall and is part of a mixed-use development constructed by Mercy Housing that will serve children and families in East Colfax.

**Lifespan Local** purchased the Redeemer Lutheran Church in Southwest Denver, which is home to many immigrants and refugees and historically to a significant Indigenous community, and has begun to transform this space into a community center that is currently known as Westwood Redeemer. This hub of community well-being will include MHEL's early learning center.

**Mile High United Way** is converting conference space at its headquarters into an employee-sponsored early childhood education center that will be operated by MHEL and serve residents in Five Points and surrounding neighborhoods.

*Left to right: visit to the Rose on Colfax; rendering of Westwood Redeemer in Southwest Denver; interior rendering of early learning center at Mile High United Way.*



# COMMUNITY BUILDING

## Babies Ready for College

MHEL provides training for Family, Friend, and 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 that their children will succeed in school.

This past year, 323 caregivers, parents, 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.

With the opening of our new early learning center at the Rose on Colfax, families are building community and connecting and learning with one another through our Short & Sweet Book Clubs and Play & Learn Groups. 36 families who live in the East Colfax neighborhood participated in these programs. Families also received comprehensive health and family support services.

## Family-Centered Celebrations

As the end of the school year for many of our classrooms ended this summer, our children, families, and staff found time to celebrate together. Our centers planned celebrations to kick off the summer, mark a year of learning, and celebrate children who are transitioning to kindergarten. Everyone participated in fun activities, bonded over food, and continued to build their community.

**“Silas is thriving with support from his teachers and the therapy he receives while at school. He has overcome his need for speech therapy!”**

*MHEL Parent*



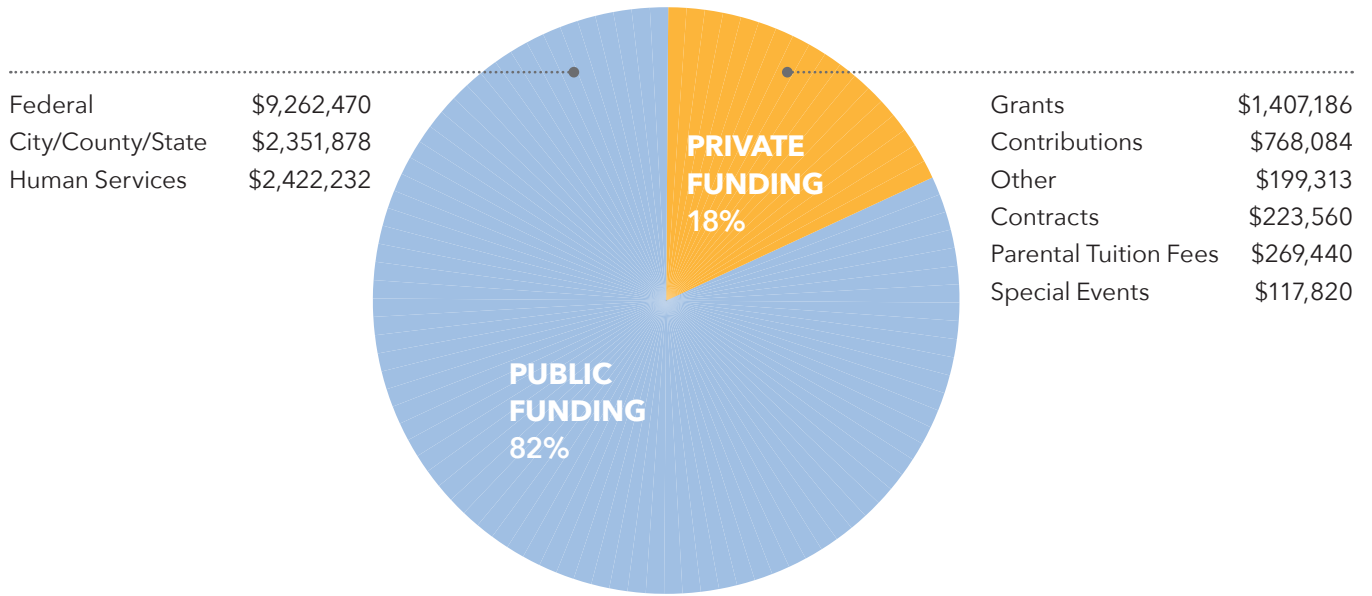
*Families at Rude Park Early Learning Center.*



# FINANCIAL PROFILE: FY 2022-2023

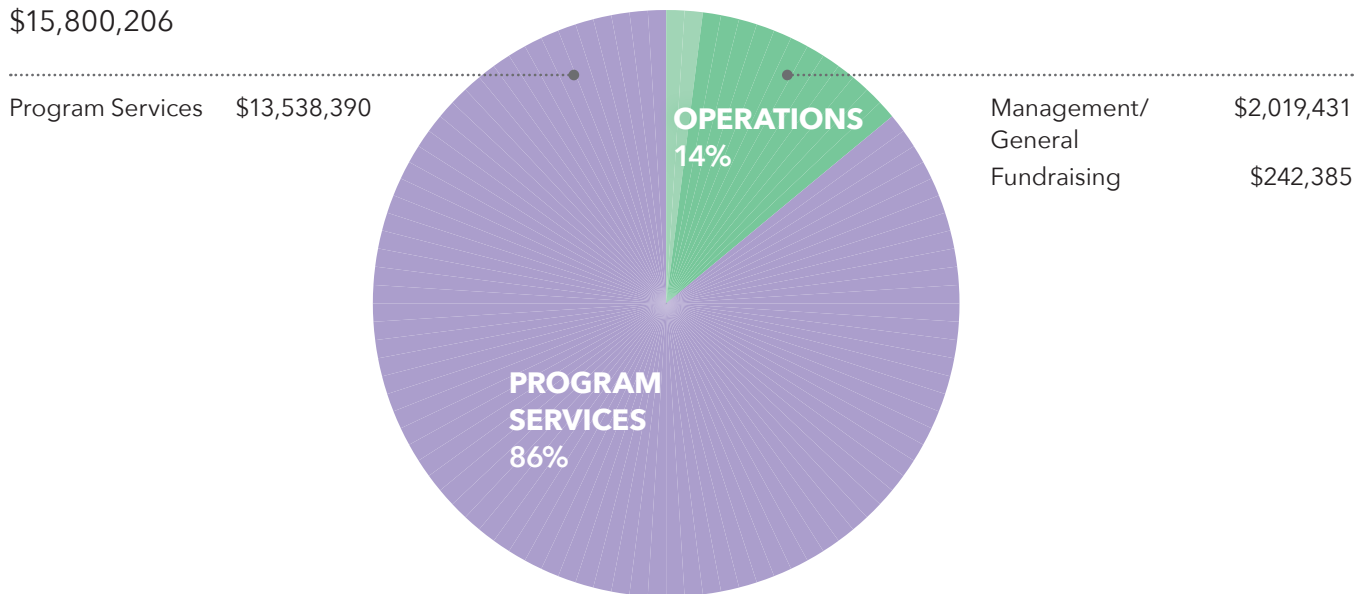
## MHEL REVENUE AND SUPPORT

\$17,015,983



## MHEL EXPENSES

\$15,800,206



*Mile High Early Learning's 2022-23 financial audit received an unmodified clean opinion, noting no material weaknesses, non-compliance, or findings. Annual budget and audited financial statements available upon request.*



# DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

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

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# STONE SOUP 2023

On the morning of June 7, 2023, MHEL hosted its 9th Annual Stone Soup Breakfast at Denver Botanic Gardens. This annual fundraising event brings together philanthropists, early childhood leaders and partners, business leaders, and other community members. 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.

This year's Stone Soup Breakfast celebrated the power of partnerships. Speakers included Heather Pischel, Program Director at Rude Park, who shared about her journey and career in early childhood; MHEL parent Yuki Karki, whose children attend Lowry; Sabah Omer, owner of Little Folks Learning Center and two additional partner sites supported by MHEL; and Little Folks parent Sharae Smith who also serves on MHEL's Policy Council. Family and Community Partnerships Manager Miranda Al-Mouradi introduced our family and partner speakers.

MHEL President & CEO Dr. Pamela Harris shared about MHEL's deep and rich history of partnering - attributing MHEL's growth and success to forging partnerships with organizations that enhance programming and allow us to serve more children and families in need of high quality early care and education.

MHEL's founder and President Emeritus Anna Jo Garcia Haynes was recognized for being awarded high honors for her contributions to our state. This past year, Metropolitan State University of Denver presented Anna Jo with an honorary Masters in Education and the University of Colorado Denver bestowed her an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters.

Because of the generosity of our friends and partners who sponsored and supported the event, we exceeded our fundraising goal and raised over \$125,000 in support of MHEL's three strategic initiatives: Community Building, Program Excellence, and Workforce Enhancement.



Christine Benero, Hal Logan,  
Anna Jo Garcia Haynes,  
Dave Younggren, Ann Logan



Sabah Omer



Seth Belzley,  
Pamela Harris,  
Ellen Braun



Lolita Ray, Anna Jo Garcia Haynes, Happy Haynes



Mile High Early Learning  
616 East Speer Boulevard  
Denver, CO 80203  
P: 303.861.2602  
F: 303.861.2604




 [info@milehighearlylearning.org](mailto:info@milehighearlylearning.org)

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