

COMMUNITY
REPORT
2024-2025



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Our 12th Stone Soup Breakfast! Making Music Together!

Special Guests

Koa String Quartet



Join us, Tuesday,
June 2, 2026 at
Denver Botanic Gardens.

7:30-9:00 am

For more information:
milehighearlylearning.org



Read about
Stone Soup 2025
on page 15!

Left: Jasmine Taylor, Elaya,
and Teashia Rose.
Right: Pamela Harris, Anna Jo
Garcia Haynes, Rosemarie Allen



DEAR FRIENDS

This past year proved to be one of the most challenging in our 53-year history. By January of 2025, 21 counties had frozen enrollment or instituted waitlists for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). This action significantly restricted access to subsidized child care for working families across Colorado.

Mile High Early Learning (MHEL) is the largest CCCAP provider in Denver, and because of this reduction in funding, we had to close two of our centers and are currently serving 40 fewer children. For families, loss of child care access directly undermines employment, education, and health and widens existing inequities.

I wish I could tell you we have easy solutions for the challenges that this year has brought, but I think you understand that simple answers don't address complex, hard situations. However, the challenge and struggle to find the funding and support for our program and other Colorado child care providers is absolutely worth it—because children deserve an early education experience so they can become who they are meant to be.

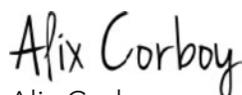
Thanks to champions like you, MHEL can continue to weather numerous obstacles to providing care to children. Our commitment to providing high quality services to those families farthest from opportunities is unwavering. Our vision of being a national model for innovative child care remains constant.

This past year we aligned our resources to ensure we can give every child the strong start they deserve.

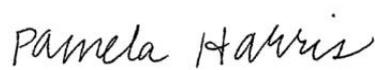
- 1. We enhanced our mental health program by hiring an early childhood mental health specialist to lead mental health services at our centers. Having an embedded early childhood mental health specialist reduces barriers to access, and achieves better outcomes through more timely intervention and responses.**
- 2. Our teachers began implementing Creative Curriculum for Preschool, which is rooted in child-centered learning—emphasizing independence, curiosity, and exploration.**
- 3. We invested in teacher salaries despite level funding from the federal government that provided no cost-of-living adjustments. MHEL is committed to ensuring that our early childhood workforce has a livable wage. Currently, lead teachers with a BA in Early Childhood Education start with an annual salary of \$57,000 as part of our progress towards parity with public school districts.**

With your continued support, we can continue to adapt to change and stay true to our mission of providing high quality early childhood education to families and children who are farthest from opportunity. Thank you for investing in this important work.

Warmly,



Alix Corboy
Board Chair



Pamela Harris, PhD
President & CEO

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Children and Families Served

- **810** infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in our early learning centers
- MHEL and other Early Head Start and Head Start programs in Denver collectively serve approximately **30% of the eligible population**
- **100%** – average monthly enrollment of Head Start/Early Head Start children



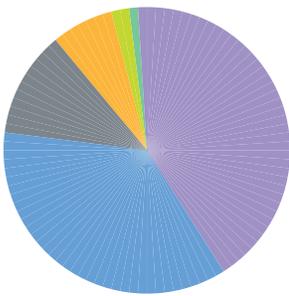
Early Head Start/Child Care and Head Start Partnerships:

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

About our Children, Families, and Staff

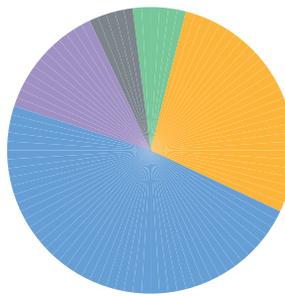
- **94%** of families were living at or below the federal poverty level (\$33,000 for a family of four)
- **16%** of families experienced homelessness
- 21% of MHEL families are immigrants or refugees. **Families come from 18 different countries and speak over 30 different languages;** 40% speak a primary language other than English
- 65% of families are **single-parent households**
- 62% of children’s **parents/guardians were working and 13% attended school**

Student diversity (810 enrolled)



| | |
|------------------|-----|
| African-American | 36% |
| AAPI | 1% |
| Hispanic | 42% |
| Multi-racial | 12% |
| Native American | 2% |
| White | 7% |

Staff diversity (180+ employees)



| | |
|------------------|-----|
| African-American | 14% |
| AAPI | 4% |
| Hispanic | 48% |
| Multi-racial | 8% |
| White | 26% |

Child Outcomes

- **100% of children demonstrated growth** and made steady improvement in the school year
- **93% of all children at MHEL** met or exceeded expectations for physical development as measured by Teaching Strategies GOLD
- **92% of children met or exceeded expectations for cognitive development**
- **90% of children** met or exceeded expectations for social-emotional development
- **86% of children met or exceeded expectations for language development**
- **100% of children received early intervention screenings**
- **77 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
- **96% of children had continuous, accessible dental care; 85% received preventive care**

Family Outcomes

- **94%** of families received support to meet basic needs: food, clothing, housing, etc.
- **96%** of families participated in parenting education programs
- **60%** received health and nutrition education
- **45%** 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:

All 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)

- Spring 2025 CLASS data show that teachers exceeded the national Head Start average for Instructional Support (3.12 for MHEL teachers compared to the national average of 2.94). The Instructional Support domain focuses on higher order thinking skills, cognition, and expanding learning.

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 PROFILES

Jasmine and Elaya

Jasmine realized that her young daughter needed more than a day care when she started searching for early childhood programs.

"I realized before Elaya turned 2 that she needed to continue to progress," says Jasmine. "At a young age, she seemed so advanced and was walking and getting into things, and I knew she needed to be in school."

When Jasmine dropped off Elaya at Rude Park Early Learning Center for the first time, she knew she had found the right place. "I was nervous because it was Elaya's first time going to school and being away from me. But as soon as we walked through the door, it felt like home. It was cozy and very welcoming. I felt like I was leaving Elaya with an auntie or my grandma. They felt like family!"

Jasmine was happy to see that the teachers and staff at Mile High Early Learning always go above and beyond. "If I'm teaching Elaya something at home, they'll teach that at school, along with all the other important things. They listen to you and understand your child's needs."



"The teachers and staff go above and beyond. If I'm teaching Elaya something at home, they'll teach that at school. They listen to you and understand your child's needs."

Jasmine, MHEL Parent

Elaya recently transitioned to one of the preschool classrooms at Anna Jo Garcia Haynes Early Learning Center, and Jasmine is pleased with how Elaya has been welcomed and supported during the transition. "Elaya continues to do all of her favorite things. She loves arts and crafts, musical instruments, and running and playing with her friends on the playground."

As a single mom, Jasmine also found a support network at Mile High Early Learning. "If you're having a bad day or struggling in any way, they do everything they can to help and make the situation better, and they connect you with resources. There's just lots of love. And it's a no judgement zone."

Jasmine also found a community that would support her on her own journey to become a teacher. "I was always planning on working with children. My mom had a day care. My Family and Community Advocate, Audrey, knew about my interest in education and encouraged me to enroll in the Child Development Associate (CDA) program."

Because Jasmine works the night shift, she needed a program that would allow her to work at her own pace and not put too much on her plate. Jasmine was able to take classes on her night off from work. "Before I started the program, I was nervous, but after starting the class I knew that I could do it."

Jasmine is excited about what the future holds. "I am done with CDA training program, and I'm getting all my assignments turned in and starting the process of becoming a teacher. I want to work my way up and help other moms who have been in my shoes."



Jessieca

Jessieca is enrolled at Rose on Colfax Early Learning Center and recently transitioned from the toddler classroom to the preschool classroom. Jessieca’s teachers describe her as a smart little girl who

likes to be around other children. Jessieca is extremely outgoing and loves playdough and painting activities. She also likes to read books and put together puzzles and enjoys dancing with her classmates. Jessieca lives with her father, Jessie, a single parent who is very involved in his children’s education.



Romeo

Romeo attends the toddler classroom at Westwood Early Learning Center. Romeo recently completed his first year in the program and is making progress every day with the routines established

by his teachers. Romeo enjoys all of the classroom activities but especially enjoys spending time with his teachers. As Romeo approaches his third birthday he will transition to our preschool classroom. Romeo’s teachers are confident that he will be ready! Romeo’s mom, Porfiria, is an amazing mother who has overcome incarceration, domestic violence, and being unhoused. Porfiria is a hardworking single parent of two children and always finds time to get involved. She is an inspiration to the staff at Westwood. Porfiria served as a Policy Council Representative for a portion of the 2024-2025 school year and is always excited about opportunities to give back to the community.

A CELEBRATION OF HEAD START

For Willie Johnson, a Head Start graduate who is now a dental hygienist in Denver, Head Start changed his life.



Willie, age 5, at his Head Start graduation

Willie grew up in Farmington, New Mexico in one of the few Black families who lived there. Throughout his life, the messages he received about his future were bleak—he would be on drugs, unemployed, and end up in prison.

When his mom enrolled him in Head Start, he heard a different message. Head Start showed him a bright future following another path – through education. It gave him a foundation to take his life in a direction he wanted.

Willie’s mom was a single parent and worked two jobs. But he remembers her being involved with his Head Start program—volunteering in the classroom and helping with projects. He remembers community volunteers and one in particular who made blankets for all the children. Willie says that he’s not very sentimental, but he still has that blanket—45 years later.

Willie remembers the joy of his time in Head Start like it was yesterday—it’s so vivid and vibrant in his mind. And he firmly believes that Head Start is the reason for his success today.

WORKFORCE ENHANCEMENT

“Growing the Early Childhood Workforce”

MHEL is in the second year of implementing its “Growing the Early Childhood Workforce” program through which we provide 1:1 mentoring and coaching and help participants access our continuing education programs and earn the foundational Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. While participants are completing their CDA coursework, MHEL provides a stipend as they work to earn 480 hours of classroom experience. After completing the program, participants are placed in teaching positions at MHEL centers and partner sites that provide a living wage. 111 aspiring educators are currently enrolled.

Translating our Curriculum

This past year, MHEL translated the CDA into Arabic and IPEC programs into Spanish and Arabic, respectively. With the translation of materials, MHEL will be able to offer content to a wider audience and continue to expand the workforce.

Part nership with Centro de los Trabajadores

MHEL is partnering with Denver’s El Centro de los Trabajadores to support enrollment in MHEL’s CDA Program. Through the Work Ready program, El Centro provides English language skills, computer training, and job skills training to prepare new immigrants in Denver for high-demand workforce areas such as early childhood education. These MHEL CDA interns were excited to participate in the CPR class!

Continuing Education

MHEL continues to provide continuing education opportunities for early educators.

- 215 educators participated in MHEL’s CDA training program that focuses on those who are beginning their career in early childhood.
 - 21 of our CDA participants are MHEL employees, 31 are employees at MHEL’s Head Start and Early Head Start partner sites, and 163 are employed at other early childhood programs or are pursuing employment in the field.
- 4 MHEL teachers participated in the Place-Based BA program offered in partnership with University of Colorado Denver.
- 20 MHEL educators participated in the 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.
- 7 staff completed the IPEC credited course and 13 completed IPEC Foundations.
- 150+ MHEL educators received 90+ professional development hours - including two weeklong Professional Development Institutes and 30+ hours of intensive coaching, as well as financial support to pursue early childhood degrees.



Investing in accessible, multilingual resources is key to growing and diversifying the early childhood workforce—ensuring more individuals can successfully enter and stay in the field.

PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

Enhancing Mental Health

This past year, MHEL began providing mental health services and support to children, families, and staff through an embedded approach of service delivery. Instead of external mental health consultants, MHEL’s early childhood mental health specialist (ECMHS) is leading the work and guiding a multidisciplinary wellness team comprised of MHEL disabilities/mental health and behavior support specialists, educators, and family services staff. This approach allows the ECMHS to have a richer understanding of the unique cultural, operational, and emotional needs of our community and to establish deeper connections with children, families, and staff.

By integrating mental health supports throughout our program in a multidisciplinary approach, we focus on the whole child and partner with families and communities.



STEM Program Partnership

With support from Boeing, we launched a partnership with Denver Zoo to develop a Nurturing Young Scientists program for MHEL’s early learning centers to support the development of science skills in preschool students. Teachers and caregivers participated in training to develop the necessary skills to be active partners in their children’s learning. Our children were able to build STEM skills that will encourage continued STEM learning as they transition to kindergarten.

Creative Curriculum for Preschool

At all of our early learning centers, we began implementing Creative Curriculum for Preschool. Like Montessori, Creative Curriculum is rooted in child-centered learning, emphasizing independence, curiosity, and exploration. It provides a rich, hands-on learning environment where children can engage deeply in meaningful play and project-based investigations. The curriculum’s focus on the whole child—social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and language development—aligns beautifully with our belief in nurturing every aspect of a child’s growth.

Developing brains of children under 5 are especially vulnerable to stressful, traumatic experiences in their lives at home, and in the community. Enhanced mental health and wellness resources offered at MHEL are necessary for our children and families to thrive.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Family Engagement Event at Denver Zoo

Our families joined us at Denver Zoo for a summer family engagement event that included a scavenger hunt! Our children had a great time learning and exploring outside the classroom, and our families enjoyed the opportunity to connect and spend time together. Thanks to the FCA team for putting together a great event!

End-of-Year Celebrations

As the school year ended, our centers marked the occasion with joyful celebrations that brought together children, families, and educators.

Our centers hosted fun and engaging activities, many held outdoors, to create an inviting space for families and children to connect. Children beamed with pride as they received certificates celebrating their individual growth, and families had the chance to reflect on how far their children had come. These moments help build confidence and a sense of accomplishment that children carry with them into the future.

Babies Ready for College

MHEL provides training for Family, Friend, & Neighbor caregivers through Babies Ready for College, 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, 67 caregivers, parents, and children participated in Babies Ready for College programs, which include Short & Sweet Book Clubs and Play & Learn Groups.

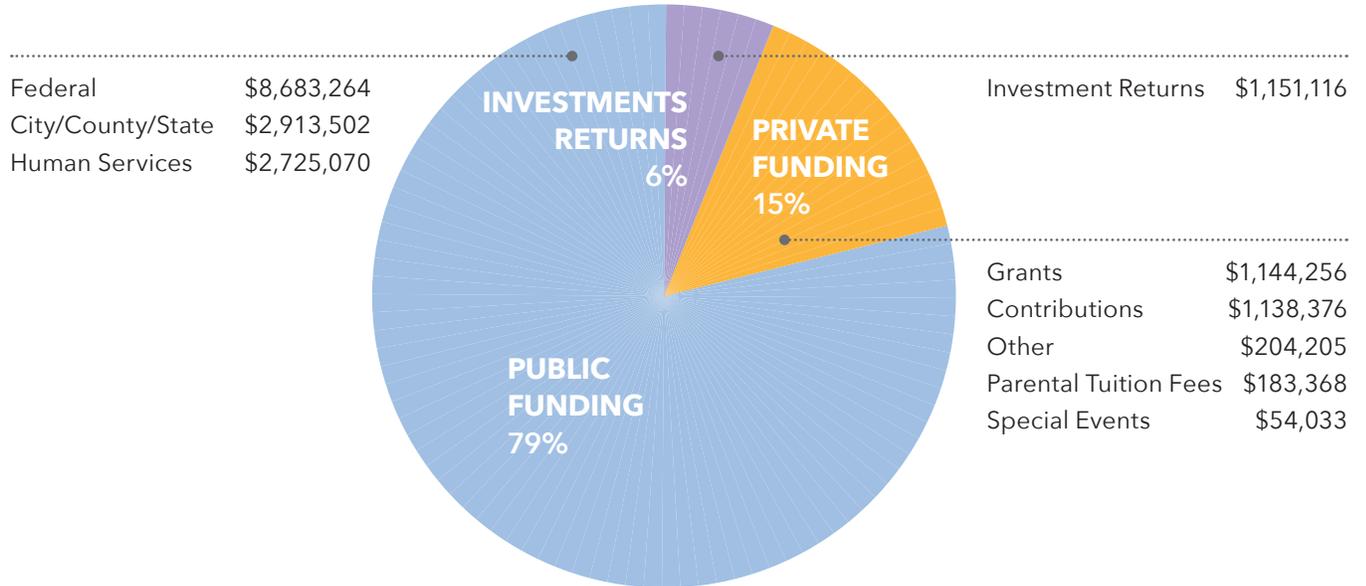
95% of caregivers who participate in the *Babies Ready for College* program report an increase in knowledge and decrease in stress.



FINANCIAL PROFILE: FY 2024-2025

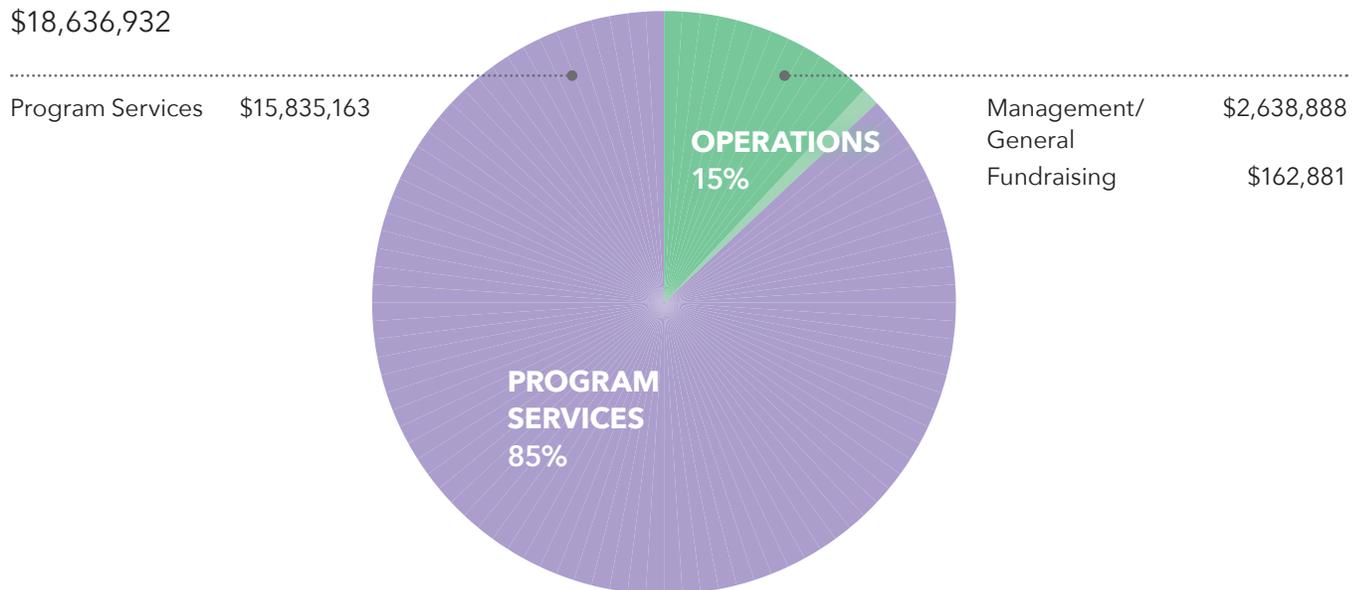
MHEL REVENUE AND SUPPORT

\$18,197,190



MHEL EXPENSES

\$18,636,932



Mile High Early Learning's 2024-25 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, 2024–June 30, 2025

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



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STONE SOUP 2025

On a warm, sunny morning in June, 2025, we hosted our 11th annual Stone Soup breakfast—MHEL’s annual fundraising event and community gathering. Over 230 early childhood leaders, donors, partners, members of the community, and MHEL families joined us at Denver Botanic Gardens to celebrate our work to cultivate joy in our learning community and to raise funds to support our program.

Because of the generosity of our friends and partners, we raised over \$162,000 in support of our work to create a foundation of supportive caregiving, emotional well-being, and joyful learning that empowers children to thrive! The response from our community has been so heartwarming and joyous!

MHEL President & CEO Dr. Pamela Harris discussed MHEL’s work to give every child a joyful, nurturing start. Several MHEL parents and children were on hand, including members

of the Policy Council and Policy Committee and their families. Chante Daily, a parent at Lowry Early Learning Center and MHEL Policy Council Chair, shared her experience as a Head Start student and Head Start parent. We were all so moved to hear Chante’s story.

Our special guest speaker was Dr. Rosemarie Allen, Professor in the School of Education at Metropolitan State University of Denver, and President and CEO of the Center for Equity & Excellence. Dr. Allen’s life’s work is centered on ensuring all children have access to high quality early childhood programs that are developmentally appropriate and culturally sustaining. Dr. Allen radiated joy as she shared her experience as a national and global leader in early childhood and the importance of centering this work on equity and of cultivating joy in early learning.



Clockwise from left, Keynote speaker Dr. Rosemarie Allen; Wendell Fleming, Mary Fowler, Laura Barton; and David Harris, Chante Daily, Georgia Harris.



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