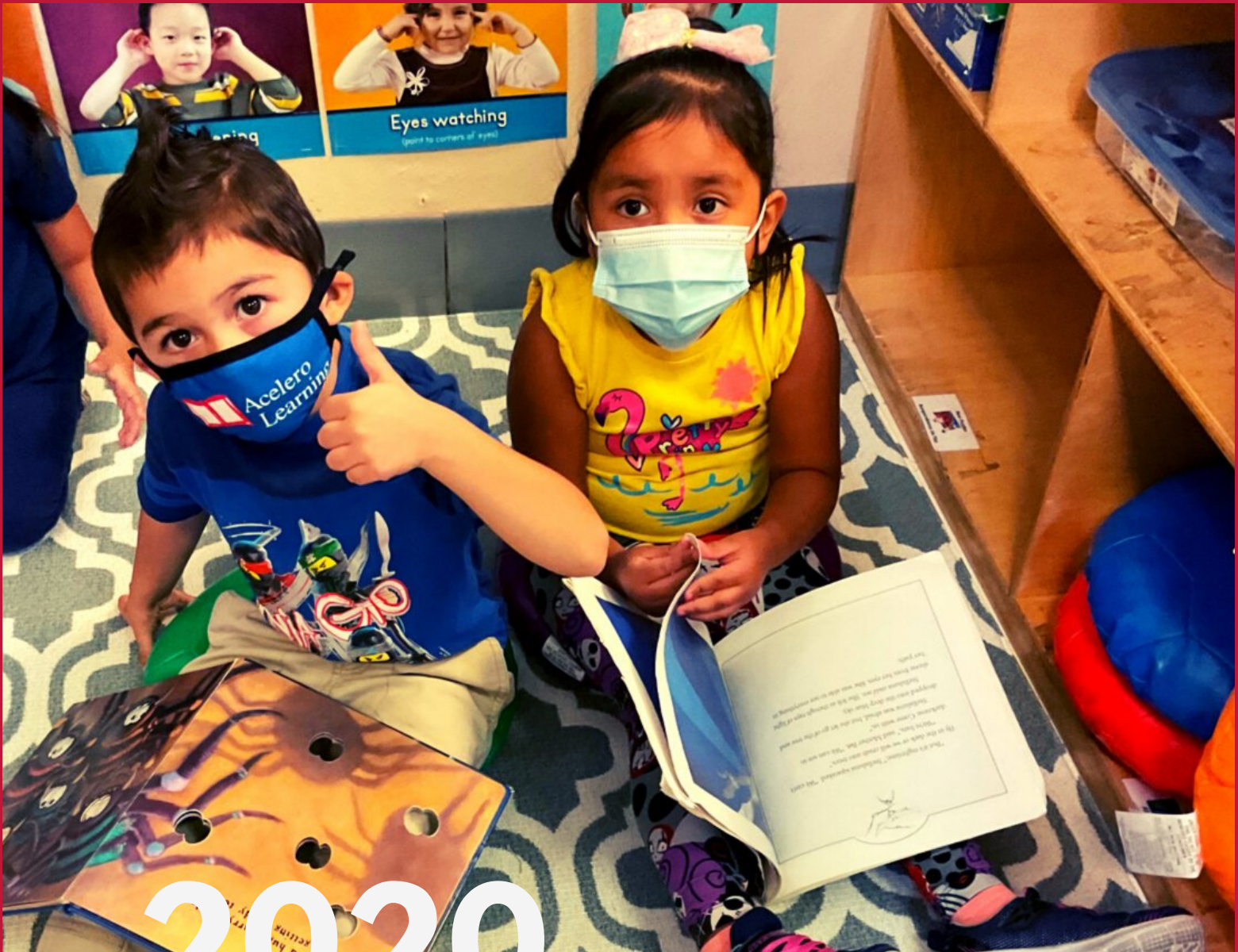




Acelero Learning

ANNUAL REPORT



2020
2021



A LETTER FROM THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, ACELERO LEARNING HEAD START

Dear Acelero Learning Staff, Partners,
and Friends,

We could not have imagined the difficulties that the 2020-21 academic year would bring, and yet we knew to expect the unexpected. We also felt certain that no matter what we encountered, we would do our very best to ensure continuity of care for Acelero Learning children and families. In true Acelero Learning fashion, we innovated in the face of challenges and sought out opportunities to broaden our impact, allowing us to proudly report that we were able to deliver on our promise despite the pandemic.

In 2020, we created Shine at Home, a relationship-based, home-learning curriculum that allowed us to offer a virtual learning model and hybrid option to our families. In the same year, we brought in a team of researchers from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University, led by Susanna Loeb, to evaluate how children enrolled in our program were progressing. We planned this collaboration before the pandemic; however, we believed that the research study may have even greater value given the new challenges we faced. Indeed, we found that children in our program saw significant gains: preschoolers who attended centers in person most of the year made significant gains in three areas of school readiness, and those in the virtual model kept pace with their peers, showing strong progress in the areas of early reading and math skills. These findings showed that virtual learning can support child development, particularly when family engagement is a priority.

During 2020, in keeping with our mission, we examined our organizational policies, practices, systems and impact to identify and address inequities within and outside of our organization, and we applied for and were awarded additional funding in Camden County. As a result, Camden/Philadelphia Acelero Learning Head Start expanded its services to an additional 300 children. We also increased service hours in Clark County Acelero Learning Head Start for 150 children.

Finally, our impact extended beyond the communities that we serve: the National Head Start Association named Kristina Bedekian, Nutrition Coordinator at Clark County Acelero Learning, a 2020 Head Start BOLD Thinker, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) elected Rhonda Kobylecky, Director of Food Services at Acelero Learning Clark County Head Start, to Vice President on the Board of Directors.

While we are proud of the impact we were able to make in 2020, we do not take for granted these gains. We continuously endeavor to make an even greater impact for the children and families we serve. It is what we have worked towards since our earliest days in Head Start, and it is what we will continue to strive for in the years ahead.

Rory Sipp

DR. RORY BROWN SIPP

*Senior Vice President
Acelero Learning Head Start*



WHAT IS ACELERO LEARNING? WHO DO WE SERVE?

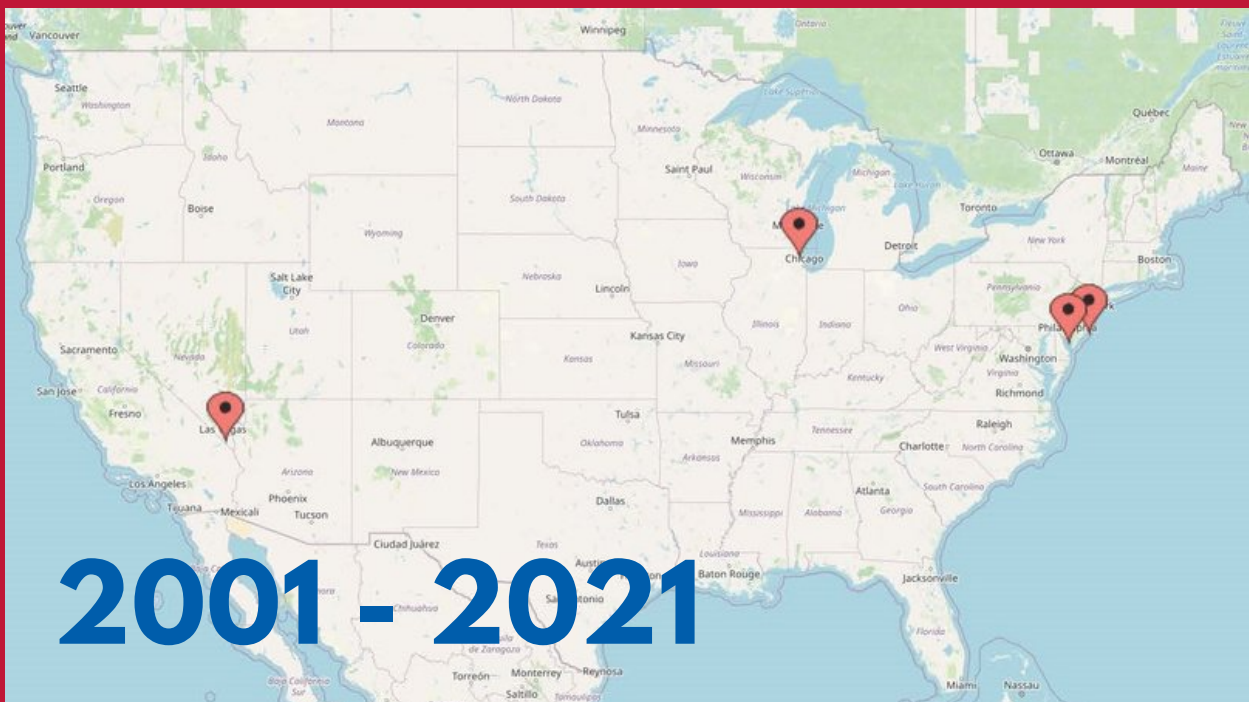
Founded 20 years ago by Aaron Lieberman, a former Head Start teacher and founder of the national early childhood program Jumpstart, and Henry Wilde, a former staffer at the Children's Defense Fund and Acelero's current Chief Executive Officer, Acelero Learning is a pioneering provider of early childhood education and family engagement services and a national Head Start exemplar. What first began as one EHS center serving 90 infants and toddlers in Camden County, New Jersey has expanded to include 52 centers across New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Nevada.

Acelero Learning's mission is to bring a relentless focus on positive family and child outcomes to close the achievement gap and build a better future for children, families, and communities served by the Head Start program. This mission is rooted in two fundamental beliefs - that every child, regardless of their family's income, can learn and succeed, and every individual with whom and for whom we work deserves unconditional positive regard.

Today, Acelero Learning serves over 3,600 children and their families, achieving child outcome gains more than double those of the average Head Start program*. Throughout the past two decades, Acelero has sought out the most effective ways to expand its impact in the pursuit of closing the achievement gap. We are proud to share in this Annual Report what that pursuit looked like in 2020-21.

*Based on external researchers finding on students who were tested after two years in Acelero Learning programs.

30,400 CHILDREN HEADED TO KINDERGARTEN WITH A HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION



DEDICATED TO SERVING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN 2020-21

In the face of the challenges posed to operations by the global pandemic, Acelero Learning leveraged its longstanding relationships with families to fully engage them in their children's learning and development and support their overall well being.

To accomplish this, Acelero Learning provided both virtual and in-person program options and adapted their classroom (Ready to Shine) and family curricula (Shine on Families) to create Shine at Home, a relationship-based, home-learning curriculum. Shine on Families' PEER cards (the core of Acelero's family curriculum) were developed collaboratively with families and integrated into tailored learning plans. Meanwhile, teachers modeled and coached families to support skill development in key school readiness skills.

To accommodate families' schedules, including those overseeing work as well as home learning schedules for multiple children, teachers across the network flexed time and met with families in the evening and on weekend mornings, providing synchronous and asynchronous online learning opportunities. Acelero teachers embraced a "whatever it takes" attitude towards keeping families and children connected and engaged.

This commitment to family engagement paid off in learning gains for children enrolled in both center and virtual learning; families expressed deep appreciation of our staff and satisfaction with our program. Meeting families' basic needs also became a key priority. All programs established a system to deliver food, diapers, formula, and home-learning supplies to all families participating in our virtual program option, and expanded linkages to mental health and counseling supports.

Our Centers also quickly transitioned family engagement meetings to virtual platforms, creating spaces for families to share and stay connected to each other and our staff when COVID protocols didn't allow families to enter our buildings. Virtual drop-in opportunities, including exercise and cooking classes, as well as support groups, sprouted up around the network. Our staff and families sought to build community and create moments of joy and laughter in sometimes painfully difficult life circumstances. At the height of the pandemic, over 98% of the close to 800 families who completed a network-wide survey reported that they would send another child to our program.

ACELERO LEARNING HEAD START CHILDREN MADE SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN 2020-21

Amidst the pandemic, Acelero Learning set out, with a team of researchers from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, led by Dr. Susanna Loeb, to evaluate how children enrolled in its program were progressing. Acelero Learning believes deeply in the value of high quality external research in any circumstance and concluded that this research could prove beneficial to the larger early childhood education landscape given both the unique historical moment and the evolving nature of the pandemic.

The Brown University-Annenberg researchers were able to conduct external evaluations of children's growth from fall to spring in literacy, numeracy, and executive function measures at both center-based and virtual-learning models. The Brown team evaluated a random sample of children across the four states where Acelero Learning centers are located: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Nevada.

The research team found that "In summary, Head Start children demonstrated significant growth on outcomes of print knowledge and early numeracy over the 2020-2021 school year, despite adjustments to learning contexts imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic."

ANNENBERG
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Acelero Learning: Annual Report
July 2021

by Leah Groom-Thomas, Demetra Kalogrides, Monica Lee, Susanna Loeb, and Kathleen Lynch

This report provides highlights of a program evaluation of Acelero Learning ("Acelero") programs, conducted by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University.

OVERVIEW

During the 2020-2021 school year, researchers at the Annenberg Institute at Brown University evaluated growth in school readiness outcomes among young children attending Acelero Learning's Head Start and Early Head Start programs as a part of the research practice partnership between the two organizations.

The purpose of the Acelero Program Evaluation was to examine young children's growth on school readiness outcomes over the course of the academic year. Specifically, the research team used assessment data, administrative data, and family survey responses to address pre-determined research questions on the change in early learning outcomes among young children. During this school year, Acelero enrolled children in both center-based (in-person) and home-based (virtual) learning models. Given the unique circumstances of this year, understanding students' progress at Acelero was unusually important for serving families.

IMPLEMENTATION

The research team used random sampling to identify a group of Acelero students to assess throughout the school year, as not every student could be assessed with

the available resources. We randomly selected a subsample of Head Start children from each learning model and delegate combination (i.e., from children enrolled in home- and center-based learning models in each of the four delegates). For Early Head Start, the research team partnered with Acelero central staff to determine proportions for random sampling. One-third of students enrolled in home-based models within each delegate were randomly selected to participate. Among Early Head Start students enrolled in center-based models across the four delegates, one-third were randomly selected to be recorded at home in addition to in the classroom, while the remaining two-thirds were recorded in the classroom only. The table below shows the number of children evaluated in the fall, winter, and spring by program and learning model.

	Center	Home	All
Head Start			
Fall 2020	196	140	336
Winter 2021	186	114	300
Spring 2021	188	92	280
Early Head Start			
Winter 2021	230	34	264
Spring 2021	187	9	196

The gains were more significant in the center-based programs, and children who attended the centers in person also had significant executive function gains.

COVID-19 has been generally calamitous for early childhood education, and yet it is inspiring to see that children saw significant gains, even in the virtual program options. What a tribute to the teachers, family advocates, and families who all adapted and persevered despite the pandemic.

To read more about the study conducted by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University or to access the complete Acelero Learning Report, visit acelero.net/news



OVER 3,600 CHILDREN ENROLLED ACROSS FOUR STATES

Number of participants and families served by location

	Total number of participants served	Total number of families served
Clark County Head Start	935	827
Clark County Early Head Start	131	119
Camden/Philadelphia Head Start	459	432
Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start	60	51
Lower North Philadelphia Head Start	261	238
Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start	33	28
Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start	193	175
Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS	10	10
Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start	792	742
Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start	53	47
Milwaukee Head Start	278	257
Milwaukee Early Head Start	97	89
Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start	118	107
Racine Head Start	204	185
Racine Early Head Start	33	27
Total	3657	3334

Source: PIR (A.12 Total Cumulative Enrollment, PIR(C.33))

OVER 2600 CHILDREN SERVED EVERY DAY IN OUR CENTERS

Center Locations	Average Monthly Enrollment
Clark County Head Start	620
Clark County Early Head Start	80
Camden/Philadelphia Head Start	321
Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start	49
Lower North Philadelphia Head Start	181
Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start	23
Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start	122
Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS	9
Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start	643
Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start	42
Milwaukee Head Start	198
Milwaukee Early Head Start	57
Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start	87
Racine Head Start	148
Racine Early Head Start	23
Total	2601



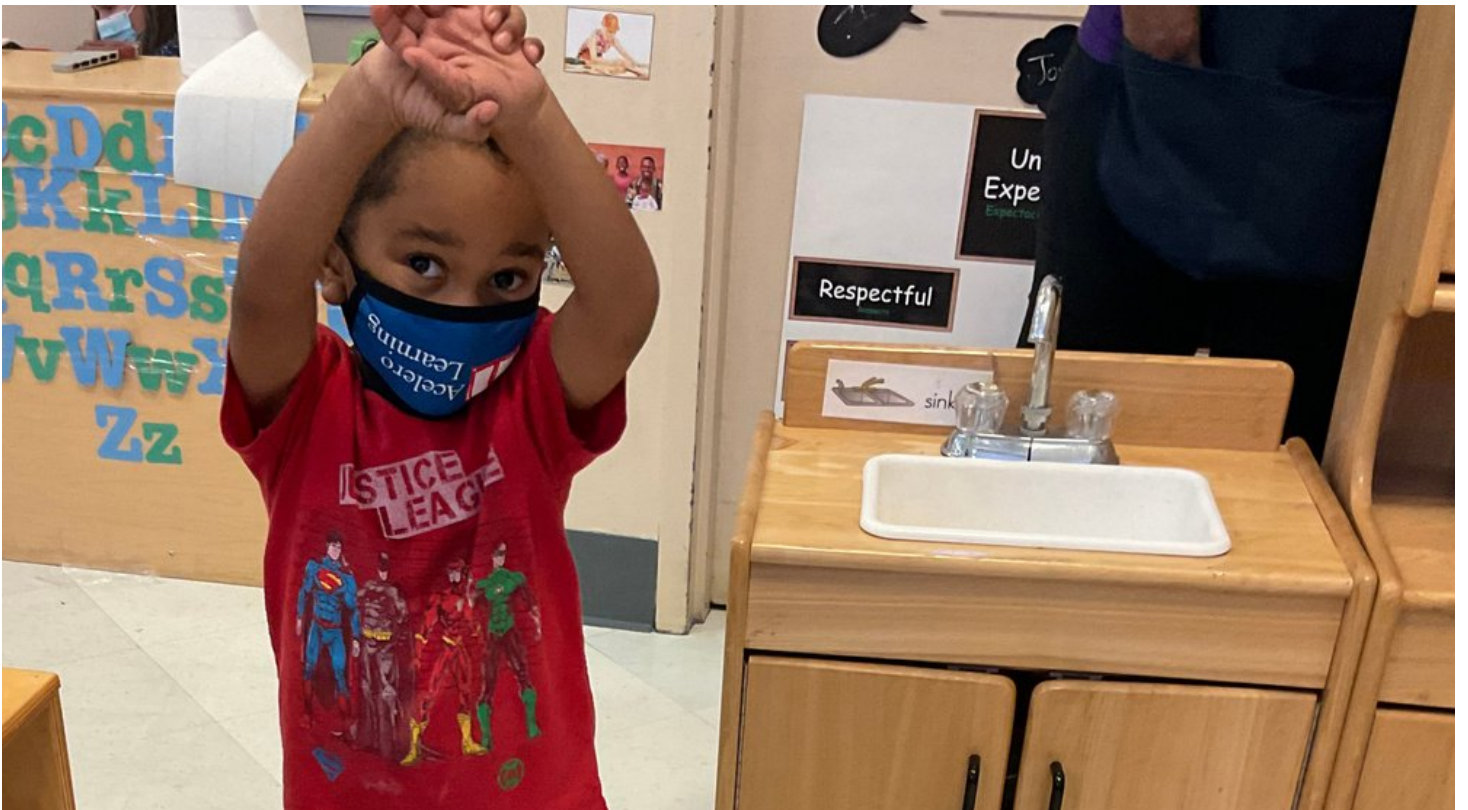
Center Locations	Number served who are categorically or income eligible for Head Start	% served who are categorically or income eligible for Head Start
Clark County Head Start	771	82%
Clark County Early Head Start	124	95%
Camden/Philadelphia Head Start	348	76%
Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start	58	97%
Lower North Philadelphia Head Start	215	82%
Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start	27	82%
Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start	174	90%
Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS	10	100%
Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start	569	72%
Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start	49	92%
Milwaukee Head Start	222	80%
Milwaukee Early Head Start	91	94%
Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start	101	86%
Racine Head Start	171	84%
Racine Early Head Start	33	100%
Total	2963	81%

Source: EOM spreadsheet Sept-Aug. PIR (A 13a-d)

ACCESS PROVIDED TO MEDICAL & DENTAL EXAMS FOR CHILDREN ACROSS OUR CENTERS

Center Locations	Number of enrolled children who received medical exams	% of enrolled children who received medical exams	Number of enrolled children who received dental exams	% of enrolled children who received dental exams
Clark County Head Start	548	59%	615	66%
Clark County Early Head Start	93	71%	93	71%
Camden/Philadelphia Head Start	145	32%	234	51%
Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start	26	43%	57	95%
Lower North Philadelphia Head Start	105	40%	141	54%
Lower North Philadelphia Early Head	22	67%	27	82%
Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head	84	44%	158	82%
Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS	5	50%	8	80%
Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start	508	64%	590	74%
Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start	39	74%	49	92%
Milwaukee Head Start	131	47%	172	62%
Milwaukee Early Head Start	64	66%	65	67%
Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start	60	51%	86	73%
Racine Head Start	102	50%	139	68%
Racine Early Head Start	20	61%	27	82%
Total	1952	53%	2461	67%

Source: PIR (C.7), PIR (C.19/18)



FAMILY REFLECTIONS ON THEIR JOURNEY AT ACELERO LEARNING



On virtual learning

"[He is] usually bouncing off the walls, but his teachers were able to hold his attention. Everyday they reinforced counting and the alphabet and sang a greeting song,"

Sharon Larson, Grandparent,
Wisconsin Acelero Learning Head Start

On in-person learning

"Every day my son learns something new and valuable. He's made friends and his social skills are better than ever -- and it's all because of Acelero helping educate and guide my child."

Parent, Clark County Acelero Learning Head Start

On family engagement

"I started volunteering at the school. It allowed me to be involved in George's education and it showed me the impact parents [being involved] can have. Now, I teach other parents; I got involved with the Parent Committee. When it was time to leave Acelero, I didn't want to go. Every year we were there, he grew and got better. And I grew and got better. I still stay in touch with everyone at Acelero. It's almost like a family."

George Clay, Parent,
Camden/Philadelphia Acelero Learning Head Start



Watch the story of George Clay and his son [here](#).

TRANSFORMING LIVES ONLINE AND IN OUR CENTERS

During Program Year (PY) 2020-21, Acelero Learning built on the success of the PY 19-20 virtual model, Shine at Home, to create an even stronger version, Shine at Home 2.0. The Shine at Home 2.0 model focused on collaborating with families to select an individualized learning goal for their child and arrange all the supports needed -- modeling and coaching on at-home activities, synchronous virtual learning, and selected learning apps -- to achieve those goals.

Creating Shine at Home 2.0 included creating a new suite of virtual training and aligned job aids for teachers, revamping the Shine at Home website, and a significant partnership with Khan Academy Kids for Acelero-specific training. In addition, Acelero applied research from the University of Chicago Behavioral Insights and Parenting Lab to run small-scale pilots of text-based behavioral nudges that dramatically increased reading at home -- from 8 to 44 minutes per week -- and targeted learning app activity -- from 50 to 124 minutes per week - with participating families.

For our center-based program, we built on impactful feedback and coaching practices, pioneered to support PY 2019-20's curriculum innovations, to create a structured scope and sequence for teacher practice-based known as Foundational Teacher Practice. This focused approach allowed us to both reinforce essential pandemic-related health and safety practices as well as develop instructional quality in each classroom. In partnership with The Annenberg Institute at Brown University, Acelero developed and ran an innovation evaluation of student learning through virtual assessment for children engaged in both virtual and center-based models.



The Brown University-Annenberg report revealed that despite pandemic-related challenges that families faced, children participating in Acelero's virtual model made learning gains in language development (Early Head Start) as well as print knowledge (Head Start) and math (Head Start) and children participating in its center-based model also made learning gains in executive function (Head Start).

FINANCIALS 2020

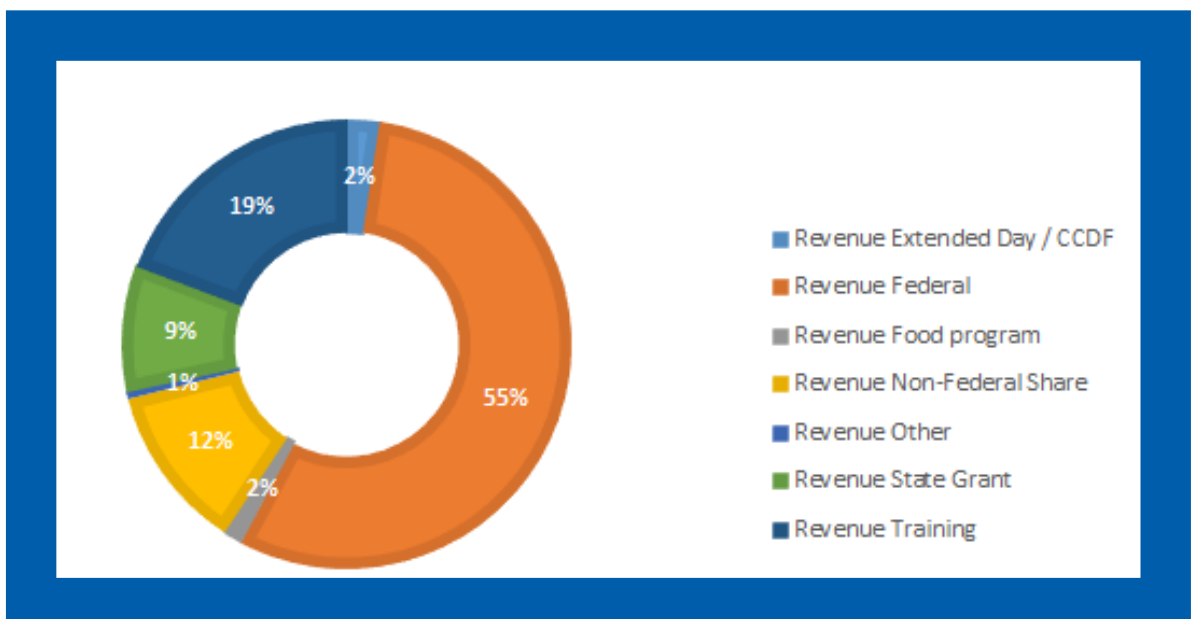
SOURCES OF REVENUE

The total amount of public and private funds received by source

	Sum of YTD Actual
Revenue	116,152,185
Extended Day / CCDF	2,762,340
Federal	64,369,516
Food program	1,670,202
Non-Federal Share	13,763,166
Other	679,447
State Grant	10,490,752
Training	22,416,762
Grand Total	116,152,185

BREAKOUT OF REVENUE SOURCES

Percentage breakout of total funds received by source



HEAD START GRANTEE PROPOSED BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES 2020

	Actual Expenditures 2020	Budgeted Expenditures 2020
Expense	114,380,621	101,936,927
Salary	59,758,504	49,228,274
Payroll taxes & Fringe	12,744,594	12,246,461
Contractual	10,712,072	6,956,489
Occupancy	8,363,000	7,653,392
Supplies	3,679,378	3,133,120
Food & related supplies	1,432,321	2,521,342
Travel	493,413	598,660
Other	2,095,330	2,237,679
Start-up	499,393	1,230,263
Non-Federal Share	13,763,166	15,314,771
Depreciation / Amortization	453,576	453,576
Taxes	385,874	362,901
Grand Total	114,380,621	101,936,927

Acelero, Inc. has completed its annual financial audit for the year ending December 31, 2020 and received an unqualified opinion with no findings. The audit was conducted by Withum Smith & Brown, an audit firm selected by the Board of Directors. The 2021 annual fiscal audit was conducted in the summer of 2021. The results will be shared in the 2021-2022 Annual Report.

EMBRACING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

Acelero's mission requires that we deeply examine our organizational policies, practices, systems and impact to identify and address inequities within and outside of our organization. In 2017, we conducted an organizational assessment with the help of consultants to hear from our staff and examine how diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging were experienced within our organizational culture.

The findings resulted in several opportunities for continued development in our work, including

- Articulating our commitment and mission-driven rationale for prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Prioritizing representative leadership and equitable talent development processes
- Developing culturally responsive and inclusive programmatic content
- Facilitating intentional dialogue with all staff and families to center equity in all aspects of our work, and
- Cultivating welcoming and inclusive communities within our organization for all staff and families.

These priorities have driven our diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging strategy to date and will be continuously revisited and refined as we grow. In 2020, we expanded this work to include a senior leadership role explicitly focused on driving towards measurable outcomes aligned to our strategic plan. We also expanded internal capacity to lead this work by identifying Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Leads in each Delegate program to facilitate the work locally and support deeper integration of our focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in each program. This is resulting in professional development opportunities for leadership and staff to set the foundation for continued progress along our journey in the years to come.

The Five Principles of our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

1. Diversity of perspective makes us smarter and stronger.
2. Our continued progress depends on innovation.
3. Our colleagues are our most precious asset.
4. Our children and families benefit from a strong educational support system that includes role models and advocates from the communities that we serve.
5. Our commitment to social justice requires our prioritization of diversity, equity and inclusion.



New Jersey ● Pennsylvania ● Wisconsin ● Nevada

Head Start Governance Advisory Committee

Aubrey L. Jones, Esq., Board Chair

Senior Legal Staffing Consultant, Beacon Hill Staffing Group

Dr. Pamela Brillante, Early Childhood Special Education Expert

Assistant Professor of Special Education of New Jersey, William Patterson University

Tameka Henry, Former Head Start Parent - Chair

Brian Pauling, CPA, CGMA, CCEP, DCP CFE

Founder and CEO Strategic, Business Foundations LLC

Dr. Earnestine Willis

Kellner Professor in Pediatrics, Director of the Center for the Advancement of Underserved Children, Medical College of Wisconsin

Vivian Wright-Bolton

Executive Director, Win-Win Entertainment

Jen Brozski

Assistant Director of Literacy & Wheatley Implementation Lead for Mastery Charter Network

Acelero Learning Head Start Policy Council

Brooke Riesterer, Policy Council Chair and Community Rep (ALWI)

Eric Johnson, Policy Council Vice Chair and Policy Council Rep (ALCP)

Ashley Dines, Policy Council Secretary and Policy Council Rep (ALCC)

Regena Allen-Wilson, Policy Council Rep (ALWI)

Desmond Benson, Policy Council Rep (ALCP)

Judith Fany, Community Rep (ALMM)

Tanya Lamber-Glimpse, Policy Council Community Rep (ALCP)

Rosa Rabanales, Policy Council Rep (ALMM)

Felicia Stewart, Policy Council Rep (ALCC)

Jennifer Quinones, Policy Council Alternate (ALMM)



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