


Learning **Thrives**
in Challenging Times



Annual Report
September 1, 2019 – August 31, 2020

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Never could any of us have imagined a 37th year for the Stern Center like this one. The first six months were robust, punctuated by a wonderful Annual Meeting featuring Mark Seidenberg, author of *Language at the Speed of Sight*. His powerful message was a call to action that reverberated among Annual Meeting attendees as well as special guests who convened afterwards to think together about how Vermont could respond. Our Lead to Read initiative had more than doubled in size with school partners and teachers dramatically demonstrating how evidence-based practices can increase children’s classroom performance in reading. All our core learning services were thriving thanks to our dedicated staff and the myriad Board members, donors, and foundations who support us in our work.

And then March arrived, following two months of foreboding news about the impact of the coronavirus on everyone’s well-being. On March 16, the Stern Center closed its doors to face-to-face services to protect the health and safety of our staff and those we serve. Within three working days, Stern Center staff rallied to meet our students’ needs through remote instruction and social learning/communication services. I remain awed by the rapid speed and grace with which the Stern Center staff pivoted. A special thank you to the internal COVID-19 task force that followed directives from the Centers for Disease Control and the Vermont Department of Health to ensure organizational sustainability, modeling community responsibility in a thorough, respectful and transparent way.

Thinking about a phase-in plan for our future began immediately. We were fortunate to receive a Payroll Protection Plan grant to cover salaries and thereby offset revenue losses so that we could preserve staff. And within less than three months, on June 8 our evaluation team thoughtfully reentered the building to serve the pent-up demand of evaluation students awaiting their expertise. Shortly thereafter, those students who were not able to benefit from online intervention services also were seen on site. But the majority of staff remained at home, becoming experts on Zoom and continuing to fulfill our mission of learning for all. As always, it has been a pleasure to collaborate with school teams who also were wrestling with an entirely new culture of education.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Gifts to the Cynthia K. Hoehl Institute for Excellence enabled us to offer a variety of coursework to teachers at reduced and complementary rates, including how to offer some structured literacy instruction online. Volunteers from our staff and family of friends even took time to attend to the gardens at our mostly unoccupied building.



It has been a remarkable and inspiring time. That learning continues to thrive at the Stern Center speaks to the indomitable commitment of staff, Board, and friends to our mission of learning for all. And in the midst of this challenging time, we were preparing for leadership transition. A devoted Search Committee worked hard to find my successor, but a limited pool of competitive candidates resulted in their reopening the search with an experienced recruitment firm. Deep appreciation to the Altman Foundation for their generous gift in memory of Bernice Stern to underwrite this endeavor. We lost our beloved benefactor this spring, but I truly believe Bernice would be very proud to be contributing to one of the most important decisions in our history.

What a source of pride to be able to reflect on the accomplishments of FY20 despite an extraordinary time in our world. The Stern Center is ever strong and resilient. And the learning success of our students in partnership with their teachers is our best reward every year.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Blanche Podhajski". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Blanche Podhajski, Ph.D.
President

Learning Through Challenging Times

IT Improvements Across Infrastructure and Services

Prior to FY20, the information technology focus for the Stern Center was on our physical infrastructure. We greatly improved the security of our network, upgraded to a modern server and modern end-user computers, and enhanced our data back up procedures. Just before the start of FY20 our focus shifted to our enterprise applications. The transition to Office365 completed the first step of upgrading our business applications to modern, sustainable, cloud-based software.

FY20 saw the start of a multi-year implementation of a comprehensive system to replace our other enterprise applications with a fully integrated, customized, cloud-based solution by Blackbaud, the “world’s leading cloud software company powering social good.” Our Blackbaud solution includes accounting and financial management, fundraising, constituent management, enrollment management, scheduling, student data management, and a robust learning management system to support both in-person and remote instruction.



COVID-19 Response

The Stern Center reacted quickly to the pandemic and responded with superlative speed and grace, working together during a very challenging time. A summary of our graduated action plan follows.

PHASES

Spring Phase:

- On-site access to essential administration/ accounting functions
- Incremental return to on-site evaluations starting June 8, 2020

Summer Phase:

- Incremental return of on-site social learning and communication services
- Incremental return of on-site instruction services for clients who require in-person instruction

Fall Phase:

- Return for additional on-site social learning/ communication and instruction services
- Allow staff occasional access into the building in order to pick up necessary supplies and to complete required tasks

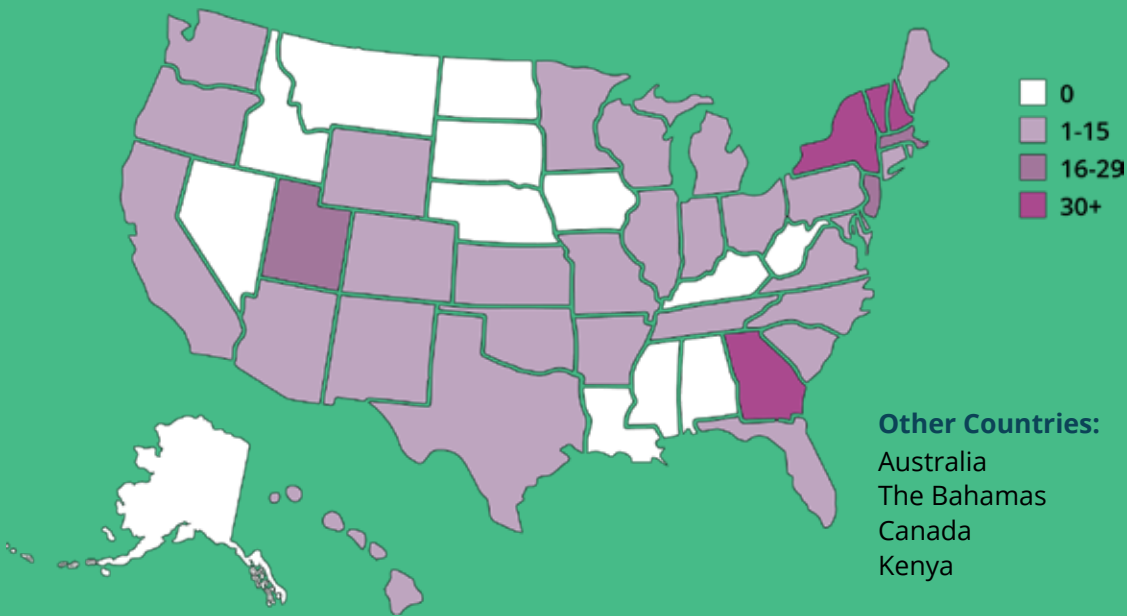
Procedural Changes:

Aligned with CDC and Vermont Department of Health Guidelines

- Exposure Control Plan
- Safety Procedures: employee checklist, health survey, social distancing guidelines
- Programmatic Procedures: client communication, scheduling, arrival, and safety procedures
- Action Decision Tree for Handling Potential Illness

Service & Professional Learning Impact

Number of Professionals Who Used Our Services and States and Countries Where They Reside



Despite the challenges imposed by the pandemic during FY20, we have served over 600 students and over 2,000 educational professionals.

Number of Individuals Impacted by Core Services & Professional Learning



You Can Do Anything

Book by Vermont Boy Inspires Kids with Dyslexia and Other Challenges

We're enormously proud of all our students, but especially when they publish books that entertain us and give hope to other children who struggle! When Carter was a ten-year-old fourth grader in 2019, he wrote a book with his mom after learning he had dyslexia and receiving skilled instruction in structured literacy at his school supported by the Stern Center. The story of his literary success aired on WCAX TV.

When Carter learned he had dyslexia in second grade, he began a transformational journey from struggling, reluctant student to confident, motivated learner...and author! With guidance from the Stern Center's comprehensive evaluation report, his school team used a structured literacy approach to put Carter on his path to success.

Confidence is earned, not learned. When a child lacks confidence, academic and social-emotional skills suffer. As parents or teachers, how can we build a child's confidence, especially if we suspect the presence of a learning disability or an attention disorder? First, meet the child where he is.

Meet Carter: a confident, motivated, self-published author with plans for a 30-book series. Carter is ten years old, and his confidence is brand-new.

When he was in the second grade, Carter completed an evaluation at the Stern Center, which revealed dyslexia, a specific learning disability that impacts reading and spelling development. The evaluator explained that Carter was a bright boy with exceptional difficulty processing and remembering sounds in words. This skill, otherwise known as "phonological awareness," forms the foundation of early reading. The evaluation showed that Carter could not connect the sounds in words to letters on the page.

Equipped with the evaluation report that recommended direct, systematic, multisensory instruction, his school team supplemented the instruction he received with his classmates in a



Governor Phil Scott (left) with Carter Somaini (right)

program called Foundations® with individual, more intensive support using the Orton-Gillingham Approach. For the first time, Carter realized that he did not have to memorize all those words in books—he could read them!

By the end of second grade, reading started to click, and Carter asked his mom if they could publish a book based on an idea he had during writing time when he created short, simple stories about a boy and a bat. Carter wanted to inspire others who struggled with reading like he did. Many revisions and months later, the image for a cover design sprang to his mind, setting in motion the final steps to publish *The Boy and the Bat*.

Though he brims with confidence, all is not smooth sailing because reading and writing remain challenging. However, like a sailboat in a brisk wind, Carter now has a clear direction. He is motivated to figure out words and to persist when challenged. He dreams about becoming a famous author. Today, if you ask him to sign your copy of his book, expect to see his new go-to message: "You can do anything!"

Written by Stefanie Waite

Because All Great Minds Don't Think Alike

We offered a variety of services to meet our learners' educational and social needs during FY20 — from comprehensive evaluations to academic instruction as well as speech and language services, including social communication.



Instruction

FY20 was a strong year for Academic Instruction especially through our transition to eLearning. Approximately 95% of our students continued instruction through that process. Our team was uniquely prepared for this transition, as we had been providing eLearning for three years. Our partnership with Burlington High School doubled our hours of student instruction.

While our services at the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center were reduced due to changes at the state level, the project funder, Canaday Family Charitable Trust, approved an alternative project for students with social-emotional challenges at OnTop and Horizons in the Burlington School District. Across all settings and technologies our instructors provided one-to-one instruction to a total of 312 students.



Social Learning & Communication

All of our services, individualized instruction, and social learning groups, shifted successfully to eLearning formats allowing us to work with individuals "in" their home environments and to coach caregivers to support their children. We served a total of 123 students.

Julie Erdelyi provided services to students while modeling best practices for staff and providing consultation for staff trainings at OnTop, an alternative program in the Burlington School District for students with emotional/behavioral disorders. Throughout the year Julie also provided consultation at Mount Mansfield Union High School and Montpelier High School.

We welcomed an additional speech-language pathologist who spent the year completing her certificate of clinical competence.

Thanks to generous support from Deborah Schapiro and Lou Polish, *Activities, Games, and Lessons for Social Learning: A Practical Guide* by Julie Erdelyi, M.A. was published in April.



Evaluations

The Evaluation Department continued to work toward bridging the gap between assessment and instruction. Our evaluators are not just experts in assessments, they are also becoming skilled as reading practitioners through Orton Gillingham training.



Although the evaluation department was closed for most of the spring, evaluators were busy researching possibilities for tele-assessment, and they learned to use the tools that will allow them to do evaluations online once the profession has approved this practice. The total number of evaluation services delivered from September 2019 through August 2020 was 189.



Hub for Educators Brings Evidence-Based Practices to Students

2,450
PROFESSIONAL
LEARNING
PARTICIPANTS

Established in 2008, the Cynthia K. Hoehl Institute for Excellence (CKHIE) provides high-quality professional learning that brings evidence-based best practices to the classroom. In addition, the CKHIE awards grants to support educators seeking to deepen their knowledge through our programs, and to schools and families whose students receive multi-hour instructional services grounded in evidence-based practices. With an especially generous gift, Cynthia K. Hoehl, a former teacher, helped the Stern Center establish the CKHIE as part of her vision to help all children learn.

Over this past year, our team provided professional learning to 2,450 educators, which far exceeds our total from the previous year. Thanks to special funding during the pandemic, we were able to offer a number of courses at no cost. Starting in the spring of 2020, we significantly expanded online delivery of many of our courses and workshops. To support educators and parents struggling with the unexpected shift to remote learning, the Cynthia K. Hoehl Institute for Excellence and private grants supported online programs, including Orton-Gillingham webinars created and hosted by Peggy Price, M.Ed., Fellow/AOGPE; Building Blocks; and our Literacy Champions symposia with Nancy Mather, Ph.D., and Louisa Moats, Ed.D. Demand for online courses is exceptionally strong.



Melissa D. Hough,
Ed.D., Director
of Professional
Learning at
the Cynthia K.
Hoehl Institute
for Excellence;

Lead to Read, Implementation
Coordinator

We were delighted to welcome Melissa Hough, Ed.D. as Director for Professional Learning at the Cynthia K. Hoehl Institute for Excellence. Melissa has a rich 30-year professional history as a National LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) Presenter, literacy consultant, and professional learning provider who worked previously as a former assistant superintendent for curriculum, assessment, and instruction (pre-K-12) and consulted with school districts in New England. She began her tenure at the Stern Center as a grant writer. Melissa is also the Implementation Coordinator for Lead to Read, working with Lead to Read school administrators and supporting our literacy coaches. Melissa holds a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Maine, a Master of Science degree from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Vassar College.



A Partnership Approach to Professional Learning

The second year of Lead to Read brought substantial growth, as this professional learning initiative for teachers expanded from two schools to ten, with one school participating in an online pilot. Lead to Read collaborated with approximately 109 educators to enhance their understanding of evidence-based literacy practices through various coaching models that incorporated:

- Foundational literacy content through the online Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators (MCRC), produced by MindPlay.
- Coaching both with educators in group sessions to discuss content from MCRC, and partnering individually with teachers to address specific needs.



Blanche Podhajski discusses
the Lead to Read Program
with WCAX

In our first online model, technology was used to engage in the three main features of Lead to Read in an innovative way that allowed for a flexible, job-embedded, learning experience for teachers. For example, teachers used video reflection software to record and reflect on their literacy instruction, and to collaborate with the coach to develop student-centered literacy goals. Teachers completed both synchronous and asynchronous activities to implement the content learned in MCRC into their classrooms.

- Instruction in the implementation, scoring, and analysis of literacy assessments to guide the instruction of students.

“I think it is imperative that every elementary teacher take part in a course such as this.”

—Lead to Read educator

An external evaluator analyzed the impact of Lead to Read on teacher knowledge, satisfaction, and perspectives. Outcomes were excellent. Teachers on average showed a significant increase in their knowledge of literacy in all settings. Teachers also reported a significant increase in feeling prepared to teach struggling readers to read (see table). Additionally, 88% reported satisfaction with MCRC and coaching, and endorsed using the elements of Lead to Read actively in the classroom. Nearly all teachers would recommend Lead to Read to fellow colleagues!

Our thanks to Janna Osman, Vice President for Advanced Learning; Ed Wilkens, Project Director; Jane Nathan, Director of Research; Jennifer White, Learning Innovation Specialist; and our Coaches Amy Ducey and Erin Manahan.

Teacher Perception:			
Preparedness to Teach Struggling Readers			
Percent of teachers who felt well/extremely well prepared to teach the following:			
	Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Increase in Preparedness
Reading	26%	70%	44%
Phonemic Awareness	25%	69%	44%
Phonics	28%	67%	39%
Fluency	39%	65%	26%
Vocabulary	40%	57%	17%
Comprehension	56%	68%	12%

Professional Learning for Educators

"Thank you for this learning opportunity. I feel I am so much better equipped to serve my students to the best of my ability."



Building Blocks

Building Blocks for Literacy® offers early care and education professionals play-based activities grounded in reading science to help ensure that our youngest learners are prepared for literacy success when they enter kindergarten. A highlight of 2020 was the availability of our one-credit Building Blocks course to over 500 participants during the pandemic thanks to the special efforts of H. Sinclair Sherrill from Boon Philanthropy. A total of 638 participants took the course during 2020. We remain grateful to the Morris and Bessie Altman Foundation for supporting the development of this online course in partnership with Champlain College.

Social-Emotional Learning

Our courses in social-emotional learning benefit teachers of students who have difficulties with social communication, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder, attention issues, and/or emotional-behavioral problems. Courses are designed to help educators use best practices to improve school and classroom climates and build positive social interactions within the student's community. In February, we added the option of participating in social-emotional workshops on play-based learning through live webinars. This year 143 participants took our courses on best practices in social-emotional learning.

Wilson Language Training

Wilson Language Training® is dedicated to providing educators with the resources they need to help their students become fluent, independent readers. As a Wilson® Accredited Partner, the Stern Center is able to offer their multisensory, structured curricula—Wilson Reading System®, Wilson Foundations®, Wilson Just Words®, and Wilson Fluency®—to teachers in Vermont and the surrounding region. Although these highly effective courses were not available from March to August due to the pandemic, they are now available online. The number of Wilson participants totaled 78 for the year.

Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators

The online Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators™ produced by MindPlay and authored by Blanche Podhajski, Nancy Mather, Marilyn Varricchio, and Janice Sammons synthesizes the reading research for classroom application. Teachers find the course rich in information, easy to use, and relevant to their teaching needs to advance literacy. A total of 268 participants took the Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators, which included 109 Lead to Read registrants.



Courses Offered:

Building Blocks for Literacy

Building Blocks for Literacy Online

Lead to Read

Phase 1: Coursework, Coaching, and Assessment

Phase 2: Coursework, Peer Coaching, and Assessment

MindPlay

Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators

Understanding Dyslexia

Orton-Gillingham

How To Teach Your OG Lesson Online

Introduction to the OG Approach

Mock Online OG Lesson

OG Advanced Morphology

OG Associate Level Course & Practicum

OG Associate Level Practicum

OG Beyond the Basics

OG Certified Level Practicum

OG Classroom Educator Practicum

OG for Intervention: Associate Level

OG for the K-2 Classroom Educator

OG Robust Vocabulary

Reading and Assessment

Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, & Assessment:

1. Dyslexia
2. Dysgraphia
3. Comprehensive Reading Evaluations
4. Reading Comprehension
5. Oral Language to Reading

Linking Assessment to Instruction with a Structured Literacy Approach

Literacy Champions Symposium

Literacy Champions Webinar:

- "Knowledge of Language" with Louisa Moats
- "Understanding Dyslexia" with Nancy Mather

Social-Emotional Learning

A Model for Managing Anxiety and Improving Self-Regulation

Foundations for Social Competence & Language Learning: Perspective-Taking for Early Learners

Play with Friends

Play, Play, Play!

Pandemic Playbook for Parents & Teachers

Social Communication:

- Fostering Social Competence
- How We Relate & Communicate

Trauma Informed Social Learning

Visual Methods for Improving Social Understanding

Wilson Language Training

Foundations Levels K-2

Wilson Reading System Introductory Course

Wilson Reading System Level 1 Certification Practicum

Orton-Gillingham Institute

Orton-Gillingham (OG) is a multisensory, structured language approach to literacy instruction, and the Orton-Gillingham Institute at the Stern Center is accredited by the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators to deliver OG training and mentoring. In FY20, 600 teachers participated in our OG course offerings.

The Orton-Gillingham Institute was well-positioned to withstand COVID-19 under the leadership of Peggy Price, M.Ed., Fellow/OGA. Peggy teaches courses, provides observations, and coaches teachers online, in partnership with other Fellows and Fellows-in-Training, including Stern Center colleague Amy Ducey, M.Ed., Fellow-in-Training/OGA. This intensive mentoring model requires educators to be observed and coached while teaching OG lessons followed by developing detailed observation reports with their OG Supervising Fellow's feedback.

Peggy hosted two free webinars in early April ("How to Teach Your Orton-Gillingham Lesson Online" and "Mock Online OG Lesson" with Erin Manahan, B.S., A/OGA). These webinars had over 100 participants during the live delivery, and another 100 participants requested and received a link to the recordings.



Peggy Price, center, instructs a group of educators in an OG course

Our Orton-Gillingham Institute was busy last fall offering an Introduction to the Orton-Gillingham course and the beginning of a two-year Associate-Level course and practicum for a group of special educators from South Burlington School District, including two district administrators. All OG workshops, including OG Beyond the Basics, quickly sold out.



Rachel Branch, A/OGA teaches an Orton-Gillingham (OG) lesson to a group of second graders at Washington Village School. Her supervisory union, (Central Vermont Supervisory Union), has worked with the Stern Center every year since 2014 to train their staff in the OG Approach.

Partnerships



Stern Center Partners with The Reading League

We celebrated our latest national partnership by becoming The Reading League VT after hosting a visit with the National Director of The Reading League, Laura Stewart. The Reading League's mission is to raise awareness, understanding, and the use of evidence-based reading instruction. **Melissa Hough, Melissa Farrall, and Mike Shapiro** will be the officers of the Vermont Chapter.



Laura Stewart (left), and Blanche Podhajski



Higher-Education Partners

In July, we celebrated our fourth year of collaboration with the Early Childhood Educators Summer Institute held at Castleton University. Blanche was one of the keynote speakers, addressing a 50-year retrospective on early childhood. We provided two courses, Social-Emotional Learning: Supporting Foundations of Language, Learning, and Social Communication Through Play and Active Co-Regulation, taught by **Laura Bonazinga Bouyea, M.S., CCC-SLP**, and Building Blocks for Literacy® taught by **Karen Shearer, M.Ed.** Castleton University has been a leader in collaborating with us to promote effective reading instruction, offering credit for numerous Stern Center courses live and online.

UVM Larner College of Medicine

We continued to welcome medical students, residents, and fellows to learn about the differential diagnosis and educational treatment of learning disorders. **Melissa Farrall, Ph.D.**, supervised rotations for two fourth-year medical students, as well as a resident from the Department of Behavioral Pediatrics. Melissa also did the Pediatric Residency lecture this spring prior to residents beginning their rotation in the fall. **Julia Molson, Psy.D.**, has supervised the School Consultation Rotation for fellows with the Department of Psychiatry since its inception in 2010 and this year was joined by **Sharon Leach, Ph.D.**, neuropsychologist. Fellows are involved with all aspects of the evaluation process from gathering valuable developmental history through consultations with families and school teams to completing written reports. We



Sharon Leach

welcomed **Allyson Oshiro, M.D.**, from January through March of 2020. She was an eager participant and joined our team in a wide variety of activities. Unfortunately, her time with us was interrupted due to COVID-19, but she reported learning a great deal, particularly about reading development. Dr. Oshiro is now working at a hospital in Connecticut.



The University of Vermont
LARNER COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

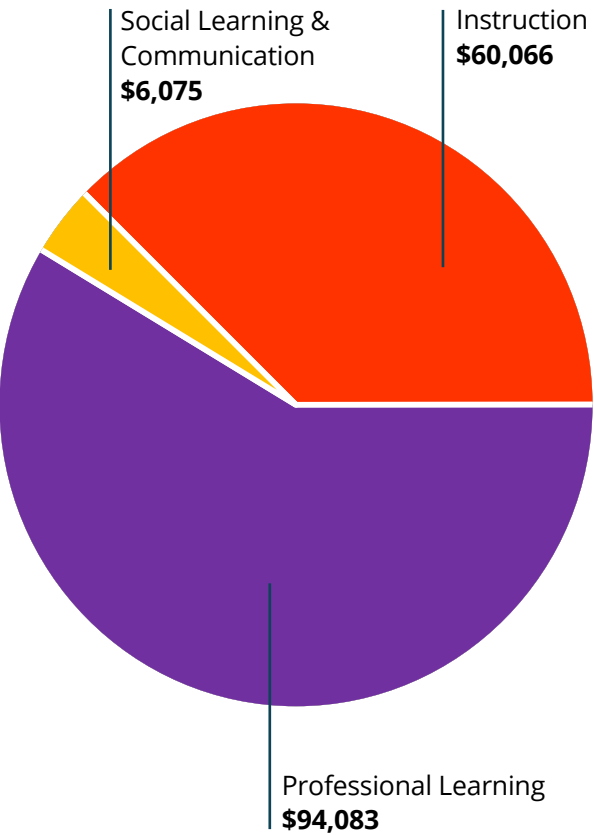
CKHIE Grant Awards

Each year, 5% of the CKHIE Endowment balance is withdrawn to allow the Institute to award grants. This year, we granted over \$160,000 to students and educators.

Students receiving a minimum of five hours of direct instruction per week receive 20% underwriting to aid in their intensive instruction program.

Individual educators and whole school systems are awarded grants ranging from 20-60% to access our Professional Learning Services through the Institute.

CKHIE Grant Recipients	
Multi-Hour Instruction/Social Learning for FY20	Amounts
Awards to Schools	\$66,141.00
Total	\$66,141.00
CKHIE Grant Recipients	
Professional Learning for FY20	
Awards to Individual VT Educators (424)	\$37,383.60
Awards to Schools plus Other Entities	\$56,699.40
Total	\$94,083.00



CKHIE Professional Learning Participants: Districts, Schools, and Agencies

- Academy School
Addison Central School *
Addison Northwest School District *
Albany Community School
Albert Bridge School
Alburgh School District *
Amherst Elementary School
Barnard Academy *
Barnet Elementary School
Barre Town Elementary/Middle School
Barre Unified Union *
Barton Graded School
Bellows Falls Middle School
Bellows Free Academy — Fairfax
Berlin Elementary School
Bernice A. Ray School
Braintree School
Brattleboro Retreat *
Brattleboro Union High School
Brewster Pierce School
Brookfield Elementary
Burlington High School
Burlington School District *
Caledonia Central School *
Cambridge Elementary School
Central Vermont Academy
Central Vermont Career Center
Central Vermont Supervisory Union *
Central Vermont Adult Services *
Chamberlin School
Champlain Valley School District *
Charlestown Primary
Charlotte Central School
Choice Academy | Washington C Mental Health Services
Clarendon Elementary School
Crossett Brook Middle School
Eden Central
Edmunds Elementary School
Edmunds Middle School
Elm Hill School
Enfield Village Elementary School
Enosburg Elementary School
Essex Elementary School
Essex High School
Essex Middle School
Essex Westford Unified School District *
Fayston Elementary School
Flood Brook School
Franklin West Supervisory Union *
Georgia Elementary/Middle School
Grafton Elementary School
Grammar School, Inc.
Greater Rutland County School District *
Green Mountain Valley School
Groveton Elementary School
Halifax School
Hanover High School
- Hardwick Elementary
Harwood Unified Union School District *
Hiawatha School
Hinesburg Community School
Howard Center *
Irasburg Village School
Isle La Motte School
Jean Garvin School
Keene Central School *
Kindle Farm School *
Lake Champlain Waldorf School
Lake Region Elementary School *
Lakeside School at Black Kettle Farm
Lamoille North Supervisory Union *
Laraway Youth and Family Services
Lebanon Middle School
Leland & Gray Union HS
Lester B. Pearson School Board
Los Alamos Public Schools
Lothrop School
Lower Canada College
Lyme Elementary
Maple Run Unified School District *
Mary Hogan School
Mascoma Valley Regional School District
Meadows School
Mill River Unified Union School District *
Milton Town School District
Missisquoi Valley School District *
Montessori of Central Vermont
Montgomery Elementary School *
Montpelier Roxbury School District *
Moretown Elementary School
Mount Abraham Unified School District *
Mount Anthony High School
Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District *
Mt. Holly Elementary School
Neshobe School
New School of Montpelier
Newbury Elementary School
Newport City School District *
Newport School District *
Newport Montessori School
North Country School District *
Northeast Elementary
Northern Vermont University
Northfield Elementary School
Northwest Elementary Sch/PPLC
Northwestern Counseling Services *
Oak Grove School
Orange East Supervisory Union *
Orange Southwest Supervisory Union *
Orchard Valley School
Orleans Central Supervisory Union *
Peacham Elementary School
Peoples Academy
Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School
- Proctor Elementary School
Randolph Elementary
Randolph Union High School
Ray Elementary School
Reach OG Learning Centre
Richford Elementary School
Richford Jr./Sr. High School
Richmond Elementary School
Rivendell Interstate School District *
Rivendell Academy
Riverside Middle School
Robinson Elementary School
Rutland Intermediate School
Rutland Town School
Salisbury Community School
Samuel Morey Elementary
Sea of Strengths Academy *
Shelburne Community School
Shelburne Nursery School
Sheldon Elementary School
Smilie Memorial School
South Burlington School District *
St. Albans Town Educational Center
St. Johnsbury Elem/Middle School
Strafford School District *
Summit Street School
Swanton Central School
Thatcher Brook Primary School
The Schoolhouse
Twinfield Union School District *
Union Elementary School
Union Memorial School
Union Street School
UVM Home Health Hospice
Vergennes Union Elementary School
Waits River Valley USD #36
Waitsfield Elementary School
Washington Central Supervisory Union *
Washington County Mental Health *
Washington Village School
Waterford Elementary
West Bee Nursery School
Westshire Elementary
White River Elementary
White River Valley Supervisory Union *
Williamstown Elementary School
Windham Central Supervisory Union *
Windham Elementary School
Windham Southeast Supervisory Union *
Windsor Central Supervisory Union *
Windsor State Street School
Winooski High School
Wolcott Town School District *
Woodbury Elementary
Woodland Community School
Woodstock Nursery School

* Indicates Grant Awards

Literacy Champions Symposium



(Left to right) Louisa Moats, Nancy Mather, Laura Stewart, and Blanche Podhajski

The Stern Center hosted the Literacy Champions Symposium with two nationally known experts on reading and writing. Drs. Louisa Moats and Nancy Mather presented a full-day presentation on September 27, 2019 sharing insight on how children learn to read, why some children have difficulty learning, and what teachers and parents can do to help.

Their sold-out presentations debunked myths about reading, unraveled the mystery of dyslexia, discussed the state of literacy education and teacher preparation, and showed how reading and spelling are connected and should be taught in tandem. Mather and Moats are renowned experts in dyslexia, reading, learning, behavior, and child development. They have written numerous books, peer-reviewed articles, and developed assessment tools for educators and clinicians who work with individuals who experience learning difficulties.

Highlights

Mark Seidenberg Speaks at Annual Meeting in 2019



Board Member Jon Pizzagalli (left) with Mark Seidenberg

Mark Seidenberg, Ph.D., Research Professor of Psychology at University of Wisconsin-Madison focuses on cognitive and neurological bases of language and reading. His book *Language at the Speed of*

Sight (2017) inspired Blanche's Transformation Initiative in 2017. Seidenberg's keynote themes:

- 1. Pre-school spoken language experience is vital; too many children are behind the day they enter school.
- 2. It is crucial to help children link sound and print.
- 3. Reading words should be like a reflex. We need to use newer, better methods of phonics instruction.
- 4. Teachers feel unprepared; we could do better by getting research through the classroom door.

He concluded, "The Stern Center could be the model for the country!"

Turrell Fund Presents S. Whitney Landon Award to the Stern Center

We are the grateful recipients of the 2021 S. Whitney Landon Award presented by the Turrell Fund. The S. Whitney Landon Awards are presented each year to programs in Vermont that have achieved breakthrough results in the delivery of services to the youngest at-risk children and their families using innovative and creative strategies.

The Stern Center's award highlighted the achievements of Building Blocks for Literacy, which has reached over 4,000 educators with in-person and online training, preparing more than 100,000 children to enter kindergarten ready to read. Published studies documented that children whose teachers took Building Blocks did better on early literacy measures and those in the lowest 20th percentile, including children in poverty, rose from below risk to above at-risk levels.

We are delighted by this honor and extend our gratitude to the Turrell Fund for its longstanding and generous support of Building Blocks and the Stern Center.

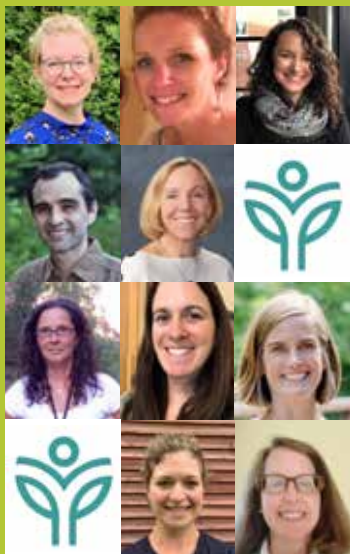


Welcome New Staff!

Erin Affronti, M.Ed.
Julia Caminiti, M.S.
Catherine DiBona, M.S. CCC-SLP
Dylan Fitzsimmons, M.S.
Melissa Hough, Ed.D.

Elizabeth Keenan, M.Ed.
Jodi Martin, M.Ed.
Kathryn Mootz, M.A., CCC-SLP
Anika Paaren-Sdano, Ph.D.
Tammy Smith
Jennifer Wade, M.Ed.

Instructor
Communications Specialist
Speech Language Pathologist
Instructor
Director of PL at the CKHIE &
Lead to Read Implementation Dir.
Structured Literacy Coach
Instructor
Evaluator
Structured Literacy Coach
Research Associate
Instructor



Publications, Articles, and Presentations



Publications

Julie Erdelyi, M.A., Autism Specialist and Director of Social Learning and Communication Services, celebrated the April release of the Stern Center's most recent publication, *Activities, Games, and Lessons for Social Learning: A Practical Guide* (Corwin). This project was made possible by a generous gift from Deborah Schapiro and Lou Polish. Julie also serves on the Curriculum Advisory Board for Changing Perspectives, a national nonprofit that offers cutting-edge resources to schools to educate students about disabilities and create inclusive and empathic learning environments.



Articles

Director of Evaluations **Melissa Farrall, Ph.D.**, SAIF and Jane Ashby (formerly of the Stern Center), published an article in the OGA newsletter entitled "The Brain Basis of Fluency Development: Implications for Assessment & Instruction." This article takes another look at the role of fluency training, and the importance of ensuring that students develop their phonological awareness and reading accuracy. This article has been selected by the OGA as required reading for the Associate Level certification.

Peggy Price, M.Ed Director of the Orton-Gillingham Institute; **SJ Larkspur**, Professional Learning Intake Coordinator; and **Amy Ducey**, M.A., Orton-Gillingham Coach, wrote an article published in the summer/fall 2020 Orton-Gillingham Academy newsletter entitled, "Designing Online Orton-Gillingham Courses".



Presentations

Jennifer White, Ph.D. and **Janna Osman**, M.Ed. participated in the third annual Reading League Conference in Syracuse, New York and delivered the presentation, "Collaboratively Advancing Teacher Knowledge in Literacy." The team demonstrated the power of both in-person and online professional development by having Janna present in person and Jennifer demonstrate online delivery from Arizona.

Melissa Farrall, Ph.D., SAIF, presented at the International Dyslexia Association Pre-Conference Symposium where she spoke about language assessment and structured literacy. Melissa then presented a workshop with Dr. Jane Ashby on the role of sight word instruction in reading. Melissa also served as an advisory panel member for the new Pearson Wechsler Individual Achievement Test, Fourth Edition, a major tool for academic assessment, published September 2020.

Blanche Presents at the Early Childhood Educators Summer Institute

Blanche Podhajski, Ph.D., was the keynote speaker at the fourth annual Early Childhood Educators Summer Institute hosted by Castleton University, July 21, 2020. The title of her presentation was, "Still Dreamin' After All These Years; a 50-year retrospective on early childhood and the research discoveries that enlightened practice."



Congratulations!

Congratulations to all of the following who, under the direction of our own **Peggy Price**, M.Ed., Director of the Orton-Gillingham Institute, studied the OG Approach:

Abby Roy completed her 100-hour Associate Level OG Practicum. **Tracy Stein** and **Kelsey Hanrahan** are entering their second year of the Associate Level OG Practicum. **Cat McKelvey**, PsyD., and **Sharon Leach**, Ph.D., completed a two-week OG course this summer.



The Hoehl Family

In December of 2019, the **Hoehl Family Foundation** made a generous donation to the Cynthia K. Hoehl Institute for Excellence in honor of Blanche's retirement, in order to continue to deepen and expand teacher knowledge in the science of reading and to support students with complex challenges. We are deeply grateful to the Hoehl family for all that they have made possible for teachers throughout Vermont and beyond.

Tracy and Rich Tarrant, Jr.

A generous grant from Tracy and Rich Tarrant, Jr. supported Lead to Read and our scholarship program. This gift builds upon the Tarrants' longstanding commitment to support educational excellence for teachers, and to enable all students to access the literacy instruction they need to succeed. We are deeply grateful to the Tarrants! The gift from Tracy and Rich joins with those of other generous individuals this year who contributed to scholarships.

Thanks to the generosity of the Tarrants and others, we were able to award over \$125,000 in scholarships. Scholarship fundraisers and a grant from **Shelburne Charlotte Hinesburg Interfaith Projects (SCHIP)** helped to support these awards. We thank all those who participated in our Mother's Day and Father's Day fundraisers for scholarships as well. Scholarships make a huge difference in the lives of students and their families, creating greater access to the expertise of Stern Center instructors and evaluators. To quote a note from a parent:

"I don't think I can ever thank you enough for helping her."

Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation

The Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation made a major grant to support further expansion of Lead to Read, our systems-change reading reform initiative. This investment enabled the Stern Center to expand Lead to Read from its two pilot sites to ten sites across the state for the 2019-20 school year, including one pilot site which modeled completely online coaching and training. This pilot then became the template for the conversion of Lead to Read to 100% online that was necessitated by COVID-19. The Byrne Foundation has been critical in the development of Lead to Read, and our deepest appreciation goes to Mrs. Byrne!



Beacon for Learning Campaign

The biggest highlight of the year for the Development Team was the launch of the Beacon for Learning Campaign: Honoring Blanche's Enduring Vision. This effort was led by the Beacon Advisory Team of Peter Stern (chair), Margie Stern, Sarah Gray Gund, Elizabeth Woods, Bud Meyers, Ed Wilkens, Will Billings, Gina Haddock, and the staff of the Development Department. Over \$1.18M for the campaign has been raised so far, with 55 donors participating in the silent phase of the Campaign. This endowment campaign will establish the Blanche Podhajski President's Chair Endowment. Each fiscal year, we will draw 5% of the balance to support the compensation of the President and thereby reduce the Stern Center's annual operating expenses. We are grateful to these prescient donors, who are making a longstanding investment in the Stern Center's future.



Blanche Podhajski working with students

Cherished Friends

The year was marked by the passing of cherished friends of the Stern Center: Bernice Stern, Ellen Wilkins, Jeanne Jenkins, and Diane Meyer. The generous memorial gifts celebrate the legacy of these treasured friends.



Ellen Wilkins



Diane Meyer



Jeanne Jenkins



Bernice Stern

Bernice Stern

Our beloved founding benefactor Bernice Stern passed away this spring at the age of 103. Hers was a richly accomplished life as one of the first women entrepreneurs, a generous philanthropist, and our

forever friend. The Stern Center is named for her and her cherished husband Milton. Bernice visited frequently, attending events like the family fun festival, the Jeff Stone Memorial Tennis Tournaments, and our 25th anniversary celebration. But what she enjoyed most was meeting the students who succeeded because of the Stern Center. Her legacy to learning and our love for her are eternal.

Scholarship Program Delivers

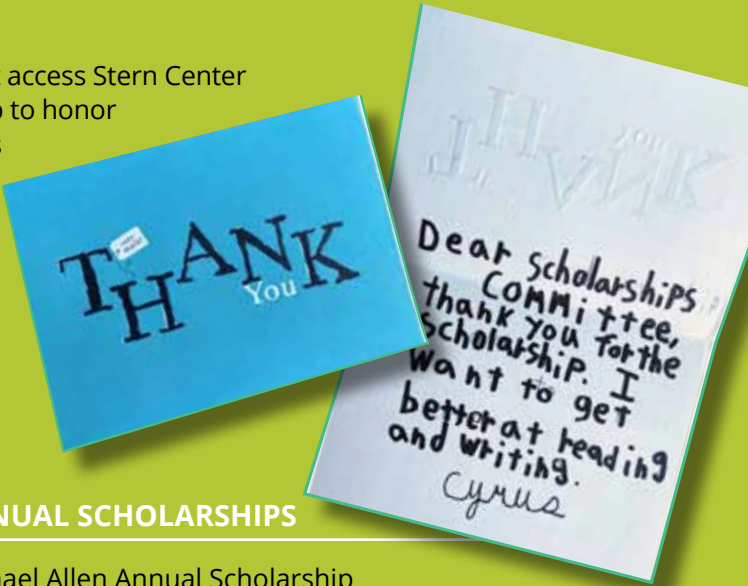
Have you considered establishing a scholarship to help a student access Stern Center services? You can establish an annual or an endowed scholarship to honor or memorialize a loved one. Each year, our scholarship recipients express deep gratitude to these donors for the funds they receive to make services accessible. We were honored to award the following scholarships this year:

ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIPS

- Charles Bartlett Scholarship
- Eileen Bonner Botjer Memorial Scholarship
- Leslie Watson Botjer Memorial Scholarship
- John Connell Scholarship
- Ursula Crews Memorial Scholarship
- T. Peter Doremus Jr. Memorial Scholarship
- Friends of the Stern Center Endowed Scholarship
- Pat Greene Memorial Scholarship
- William Cameron Hagedorn Memorial Scholarship
- Katie Doremus Halsey Scholarship
- Herbert L. Martin, M.D. Memorial Scholarship
- The Podhajski Family Scholarship
- Humbert L. Riva, M.D. Memorial Scholarship
- Neil Shapiro Memorial Scholarship
- Smallwood Family Scholarship

ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIPS

- Michael Allen Annual Scholarship
- Kusiak Family Scholarship
- Dr. John LeConche Memorial Scholarship
- Blanche M. Podhajski Memorial Scholarship
- Paul Post Memorial Scholarship
- Eleanor "Chris" Pratt Memorial Scholarship
- Paul Toomey Memorial Scholarship
- Lester Wallman, M.D. and Elizabeth Wallman Memorial Scholarship
- Stevenson H. Waltien Jr. Memorial Scholarship



Thank You for Your Support

Visionary Circle

\$100,000 & Up

Hoehl Family Foundation
The Morris & Bessie Altman Foundation
Geoffrey Gund Foundation
Bernice and Milton Stern Foundation

Luminary Circle

\$50,000-\$99,999

The Jack and Dorothy Byrne Foundation
Sarah Gray Gund
Tracy & Rich Tarrant, Jr.

Founders Circle

\$25,000-\$49,999

Ann A. Mergens Foundation

President's Circle

\$10,000-\$24,999

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Kate Robinson Schubart & William Schubart
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The Mill Foundation
Justin & Julia Molson
Mount Philo Fund
People's United Community Foundation
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Gene & Julie Richards
Ann and Frank Smallwood
Incentive Fund of the VT Community Foundation
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Adam Wing & Jeanne Landau
Elizabeth Woods

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Beatrice Samuelson
Carla Shavel
Cena Abremo Shaw
Peter & Gayle Shaw
Diane Shepler
Peter & Anne Silberfarb
Christine Szarek
Rup & Patricia Tandan
Richard & Beverly Villamil
Charles & Mary Ann Wolf

Gifts in Memory of:

The names of those being remembered appear in BOLD letters and are followed by the names of those who made the gifts.

Leslie Watson Botjer
Ryan Botjer

Rosario A. Cadorette
Martha Fraser

Ursula & Jack Crews
Kathy & Saul Agel
Brian & Sherrill Crabtree
Phyllis Crews
Patrick & Jill McCaffrey

Mary Duffy
Gary Julian

Michael Flaherty
Paula Flaherty

Iris Gardner
Cynthia Gardner-Morse

Lillian Goss
Blanche Podhajski

Pat Greene
Aline Dulaney

Jeanne Jenkins
Sally Caswell
Gloria Heininger
Suzanne Jenkins
Nancy Jenkins
Paula LaRose
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Patricia Pizzagalli
Christine Szarek
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Anonymous
Robin & Randy Bertrand
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Laurie Caswell Burke

We thank all those who made gifts supporting all kinds of learners. If we have inadvertently omitted any names, we apologize and ask you to contact us with the correction. This listing includes donations received during FY20: September 1, 2019–August 31, 2020.

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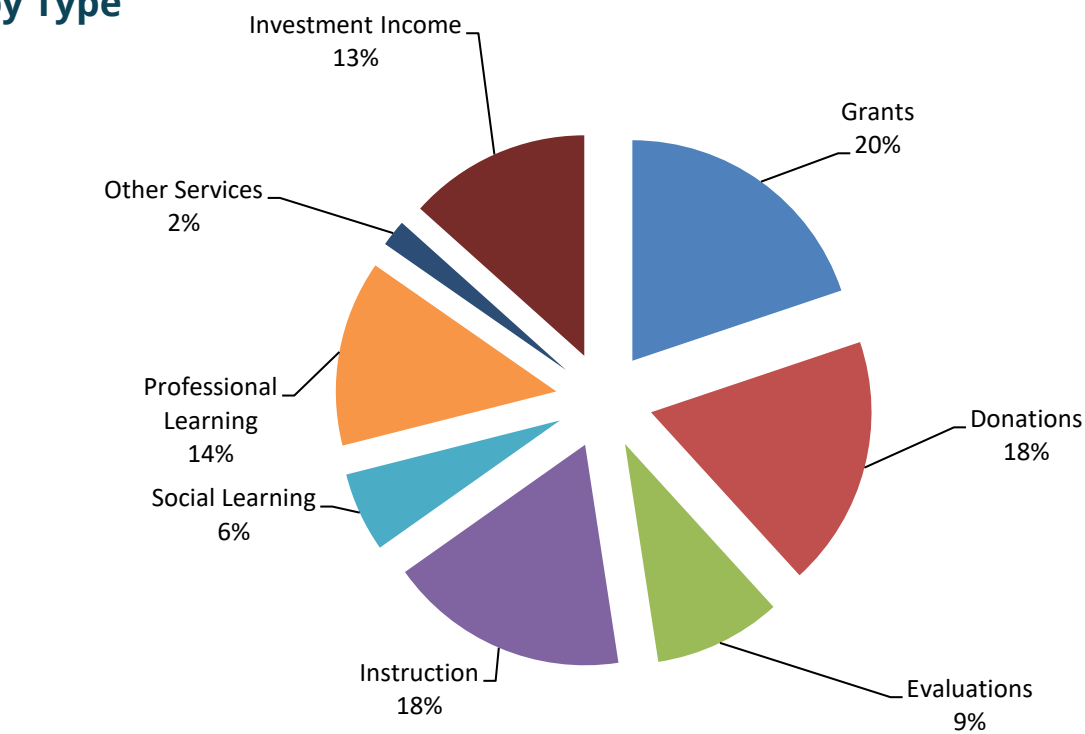
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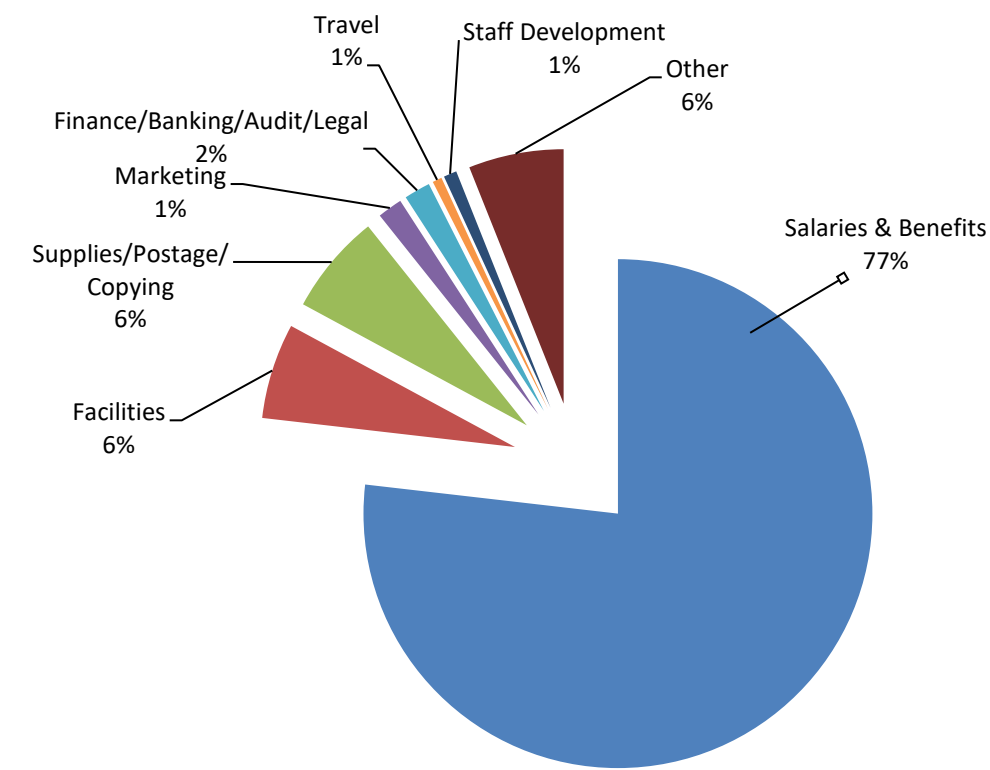
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Financials: September 1, 2019 — August 31, 2020

Revenue by Type



Expenses by Type



Statement of Revenue and Expenditures *

	Unrestricted & Scholarship Funds	Temporarily Restricted Funds	Permanently Restricted Funds	Total
Revenue				
Evaluations	\$477,885	\$0	\$0	\$477,885
Instructional Services	901,889	-	-	901,889
Social Learning & Communication	298,687	-	-	298,687
Professional Learning	697,273	-	-	697,273
Other Services	100,028	-	-	100,028
Subtotal Services	\$2,475,762	\$0	\$0	\$2,475,762
Scholarships	(127,067)	-	-	(127,067)
Contributions & Grants	258,439	1,014,882	682,764	1,956,085
Other Income	37,962	-	683,642	721,604
Discounts & N/C's	(25,870)	-	-	(25,870)
Reallocations for Operations	150,000	(150,000)	-	-
Services Funded by Grants	199,100	(353,000)	-	(153,900)
Total Revenue	\$2,968,326	\$511,882	\$1,366,406	\$4,846,614
Expenses				
Salaries/Wages	2,369,532	-	-	2,369,532
Benefits	457,123	-	-	457,123
Supplies/Postage/Copying	233,175	2,011	-	235,186
Facilities	223,126	-	-	223,126
Marketing	49,111	9,002	-	58,113
Spcl Events/Prsntatns/Mtgs	15,177	5,000	-	20,177
Staff Development/Training	23,434	7,160	-	30,594
Travel	21,958	-	-	21,958
Finance/Legal/Audit	30,060	-	31,298	61,358
Miscellaneous	5,592	-	-	5,592
Transfers T/F End TRNA	(66,000)	64,000	-	(2,000)
Misc - Program Related	476	-	-	476
Overhead Recovered/Charged	-	-	-	-
Total Expenses	3,362,764	87,172	31,298	3,481,235
Increase/(Decrease) in Net Assets before Reallocations for Capital	(\$394,438)	\$424,710	\$1,335,108	\$1,365,379
Reallocations for Capital	-	-	-	-
Increase/(Decrease) in Net Assets	(\$394,438)	\$424,710	\$1,335,108	\$1,365,379

* All figures represent unaudited financial results. Figures do not include expected forgiveness of PPP loan received in FY20. Forgiveness of loan expected in FY21.

FY20 Staff

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Cecilia Bucca, M.F.A.	Instructor	Barbara Moore, B.S.	Administrative Assistant for Instruction & Evaluations
MacCall Buckley, M.Ed.	Instructor	Kathryn Mootz, M.A. CCC-SLP	SLP Evaluator
Mollie Burke-Bendzun, M.S., SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist	Jane Nathan, Ph.D.	Research Director
Julie Cadwallader Staub, M.S.W.	Development Director	Nancy Nugent, B.A.	Front Desk Administrative Assistant
Sandra Cameron, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Director	Francis O'Brien, M.Ed.	Instructor
Julia Caminiti, M.S.	Communications Coordinator	Janna Osman, M.Ed.	VP For Advanced Learning
Karen Cannon	AP/AR Assistant	Marcia Perry, B.S.	Instructor
Laurie Caswell Burke, M.Ed.	Special Gifts Liaison	Peggy Price, M.Ed.	Director of the OG Institute
Candace Condry Bowles, M.S.	Instructor	Elizabeth Rainville, M.S.Ed., CCC-SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist
Jane Corvin, M.S.	OG Supervising Fellow	Pamela Reynolds, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Provider
Paula Costello, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Provider	Spencer Rosner, M.A.	Instructor
Nancy Daniels, M.Ed.	Instructor	Abigail Roy, M.A., NCSP, CAGS	Evaluator
Emily Dawson, B.A.	Human Resources Director	Colleen Schuster, M.Ed.	Instructor
Heidi Decarvalho, B.S.	Accounts Manager	Leslie Sem, M.Ed.	Instructor
Catherine DiBona,, M.S.	Speech Language Pathologist	Michael Shapiro, M.B.A.	Chief Operating Officer
		Christopher Shaw, M.Ed.	Instructor
		Karen L. Shearer, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Provider
Amy Ducey, M.Ed.	OG Coach	Tammy Smith	Research Assistant
Patricia Durham, A.S.	Intake Coordinator	Tracy Stein, M.S.Ed., NCSP	Evaluator
Julia Erdelyi, M.A.	Social Learning and Communication Director	Shaun Stephens, M.S.	Speech-Language Pathologist
Christine Evans, A.A.	OG Supervising Fellow	Janet Steward, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Provider
Melissa Farrall, Ph.D.	Director of Evaluations	Jessica Stoehr, B.A.	Executive Assistant to the President and Social Learning and Communication Intake Coordinator
Dylan Fitzsimmons, M.S.	Instructor		Instructor
Marcella Fulmer, M.Ed.	OG Supervising Fellow	David J Szabo, M.S.Ed.	Director of Instruction
Corrine Gardiner, M.A.	Instructor	Michelle Szabo, M.S.Ed.	Evaluator
Ann Gatch, M.Ed.	Special Educator	Lori Van Allen, M.S., NCSP	Instructor
Barbara Greenwald, M.Ed., CAS	Instructor	Jennifer Wade, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Director
Kelsey Hanrahan, M.S.	Evaluator	Stefanie Waite, M.Ed.	Professional Learning Coordinator
Melissa Hough, Ed.D.	Director of PL at the CKHIE & Lead to Read Implementation Coordinator		Lead to Read Director
Sara Huff, M.Ed.	Instructor	SJ White, B.A.	Instructor
Linda Hunter, M.Ed.	Structured Literacy Coach	Jennifer White, Ph.D.	Special Projects Advisor
Gina Kells, M.Ed.	Instructor	Carol Wieland, M.S.	Professional Learning Provider
Elizabeth Keenan, M.Ed.	Structured Literacy Coach	Edward Wilkens, Ed.D.	
Sarah Larkspur, B.A.	PL Coordinator	Patricia Willette, B.S.	
Sharon Leach, Ph.D.	Neuropsychologist		
Kevin Lewis, MFA	Graphic Designer		
Erin Manahan, B.A.	Structured Literacy Coach		
Lisa Marcus, B.S.	Director of Technology & Accounting		

“The instructor has so much knowledge and was so happy to share the information. She ignited enthusiasm and helped to clarify so many aspects of Autism and learning.”



“The instructor was very knowledgeable and friendly. It was great to interact with others wanting to learn more about SEL.”



“Dr. Farrall is a consistently top-notch presenter whose insights are always thought provoking and useful to informed structured literacy practitioners.”





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