



Stern Center
for Language and Learning



Annual Report

SEPTEMBER 1, 2025 – AUGUST 31, 2026

**Where Learning
and Teaching Grow**

President's Message

LAURIE QUINN, PH.D.



Learners and teachers: they're the heart of all education. We know that every learner can teach us something important, and every teacher is a lifelong learner. That's why we center our mission at the intersection of the two, where our impact transforms both. Through the Stern Center, learners' lives change, and teachers grow to serve the success of all students.

We've just begun a thrilling new era with the naming of the Blanche Podhajski Institute for Learner Success. Dr. Podhajski's generous endowment gift is a lasting promise to the next generation, helping to ensure that the Stern Center can foster new breakthroughs for learners and their families. Funding access to our best-in-class evaluations and specialized instruction while investing in the continued quality of our services for learners, this new endowment's power is doubling through an extraordinary gift from Peter and Margie Stern. Our founders' vision in 1983 shines brighter than ever at the Stern Center today.

In these pages you'll find learner success and teacher triumphs alike; the latter thanks in no small part to the philanthropic legacy of Cynthia K. Hoehl, whose vision for educators continues to make great changes possible across classrooms everywhere.

There is so much yet to do, but what a joy to build the future of learning every day, with grateful hearts for those who came before. Our nonprofit mission has proven indispensable over the past 45 years, and remains essential today. As we welcome new students, families, educators, and supporters, the Stern Center persists, adapts, and thrives. Together, we write an unfolding story in which the power of learning belongs to everyone.

Laurie

Front Cover Image:
Henry with Elizabeth Cook, Assistant Director
of Social Learning and Speech Therapy



▲ Elin with Instructor
Theresa White

WE BELIEVE:

Every child deserves joyful learning and an education that truly supports their needs.

WE TURN THIS BELIEF INTO REALITY BY:

Evaluating Learners

To unlock true potential, understand struggles, and spotlight strengths.

Teaching Students

To foster success in academic and social learning that lasts a lifetime.

Growing Teachers' Superpowers

To deliver first-rate professional learning for the benefit of every student at every school.

Making Breakthrough Learning Affordable

To ensure that income is never a barrier.

NUMBER OF LEARNERS & TEACHERS SERVED:
3,922+

"To see the improvements in our son's literacy skills has been life-changing for our family."

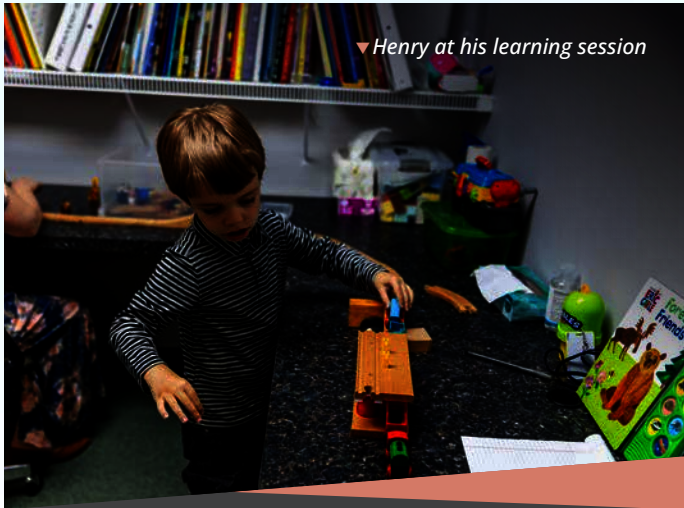
— PARENT OF A STERN CENTER STUDENT

Social Learning & Speech Therapy

Communication is the doorway to everything else: friendship, classroom participation, family life, a sense of belonging. Together we open that door for neurodiverse learners of every age, whether they're building the skills to say their first spoken word or identifying the unwritten rules of a middle school hallway.

"Bowen was thriving academically, but the social side of school held her back — making friends, reading a room, wanting to be there at all. Her pediatrician suggested the Stern Center, and she began working one-on-one with Shaun on the skills that don't come with a textbook. Bowen hasn't changed — she's still herself, quirks and all — she's simply picked up a few more tools to navigate school with a little more ease."

— KATIE, BOWEN'S MOM



▼ Henry at his learning session

"He's gone from completely non-verbal to well over 3,000 words. It's incredible to have a conversation with him. From him being nonverbal to where he is now, it still floors us — it's really awesome to see."

— DEREK AND JESSICA, PARENTS OF HENRY



▲ Bowen at her learning session



▲ A student with Dr. Sharon Leach, Evaluator

Instruction

Some students need more than a crowded classroom provides. Through instruction rooted in research on how learning grows, Stern Center students work with a teacher who knows them by name. Skills in reading, writing, and math expand, and so does the confidence to ask for help, try again, and believe in what's possible.

Evaluations

Bright, hardworking students are often the ones whose struggles go unnoticed. A Stern Center evaluation gives families and schools what a report card can't: a clear picture of how a learner's brain works, where the real challenges lie, and the specific next steps that will make a difference.



▼ Elijah at his learning session

"Elijah has always been a hard worker, but big classroom settings overwhelmed him, and he struggled to speak up when he needed help. We watched him fall behind and went looking for something more one-on-one — and found the Stern Center. Elijah formed a close bond with his tutor almost right away; this year, he asked his tutor to come to his birthday party. That relationship gave him the confidence to ask for help instead of avoiding the work altogether. Elijah entered the year two grades behind in reading, and he's now reading on grade level."

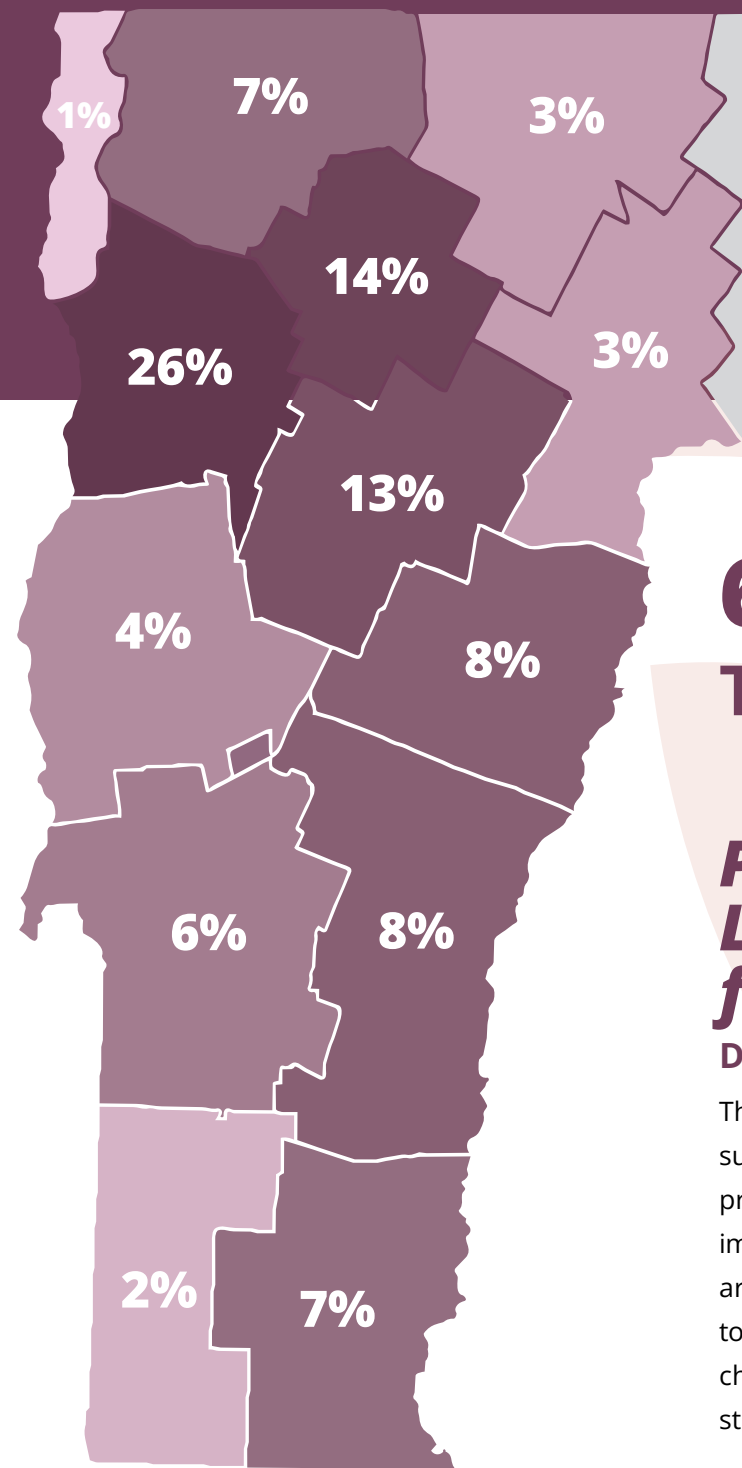
— CHELSEA, ELIJAH'S MOM

TOTAL LEARNING HOURS FOR STUDENTS: 12,406

TOTAL COMBINED EXPERIENCE OF STERN CENTER INSTRUCTORS:
476+ YEARS

"We've had a really great experience with the Stern Center. Our daughter has been evaluated there and also did some summer learning, and it's all been super positive. Overall, we've gotten a ton of value from everything we've done there and would absolutely recommend them to other families."

— KEITH, STERN CENTER PARENT, FROM A RECENT GOOGLE REVIEW



618 VERMONT TEACHERS SERVED

Professional Learning for Teachers

DEEP ROOTS, WIDE REACH

The Stern Center's Hoehl Institute supports school success by making first-rate professional learning programs for teachers accessible, engaging, and impactful. Teachers tell us our courses and workshops are the best around, and we change classrooms together through educator coaching that fosters every child's success. We know that when teachers grow, students grow. And we never stop learning together.



"I was new to my role and district in the summer of 2025 and... discovered that only a small percentage of teachers had adopted the phonics program that had been put in place. I signed our district up for coaching with the Stern Center and worked with Kendra Padilla, meeting with groups of teachers for individualized coaching, building something that would help the rest of the district. We now have an increased understanding of foundational skills, the importance of knowledge building, language development, and writing instruction. Teachers reported at a very high rate that support from Kendra and the Stern Center helped them grow and carry this learning into practical use in the classroom."

— **KIMBERLY HUNT**
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION,
AND ASSESSMENT FOR LAMOILLE NORTH
SUPERVISORY UNION



"I just completed Embracing Neurodiversity-Affirming Practices in Education through the Stern Center with Julie Erdelyi, and it is hands-down one of the most transformative professional development experiences available today. If you have been looking for actionable, compassionate, and truly impactful ways to support your learners, this course delivers everything educators are asking for. Julie thoroughly explores the spectrum of neurodiversity—from its foundational history to deep dives into specific diagnostic profiles. I left this course with an expanded toolkit for both teacher and student use, a deeper understanding of neurodivergent diagnoses, and the genuine confidence needed to navigate challenging classroom moments with grace and efficacy. I cannot recommend this course highly enough."

— **KRISTIN DARLING**
RICHMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

"I recently had the opportunity to take the Orton-Gillingham Classroom Educator course, and I have to say, this class was simply amazing! The instruction, resources, and practical application made this such a valuable learning experience. A huge thank you to Amy Ducey and Peggy Price at the Stern Center for an outstanding learning experience! I'm already looking forward to the next course."

— **THERESA, FROM A RECENT GOOGLE REVIEW**

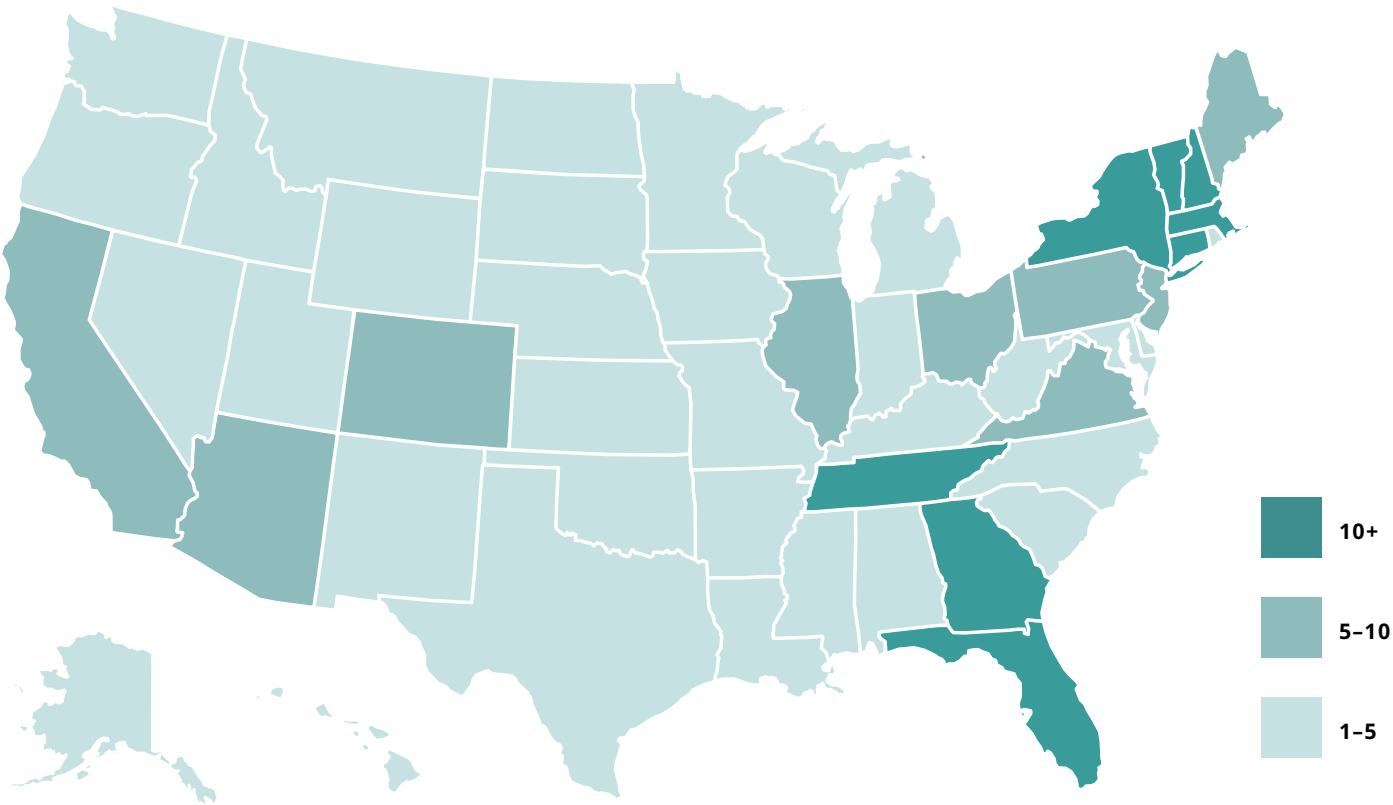
**88% OF VERMONT
SUPERVISORY UNIONS SERVED**



▲ Peggy Price, Director of the Orton-Gillingham Institute at the Stern Center

National Impact with Teachers

By inspiring teachers in our home state and reaching many more throughout the U.S. and beyond, we're building an unstoppable community of educators who are bringing shared passion and new knowledge into classrooms to benefit all learners. The map shows our impact through courses and workshops this year:

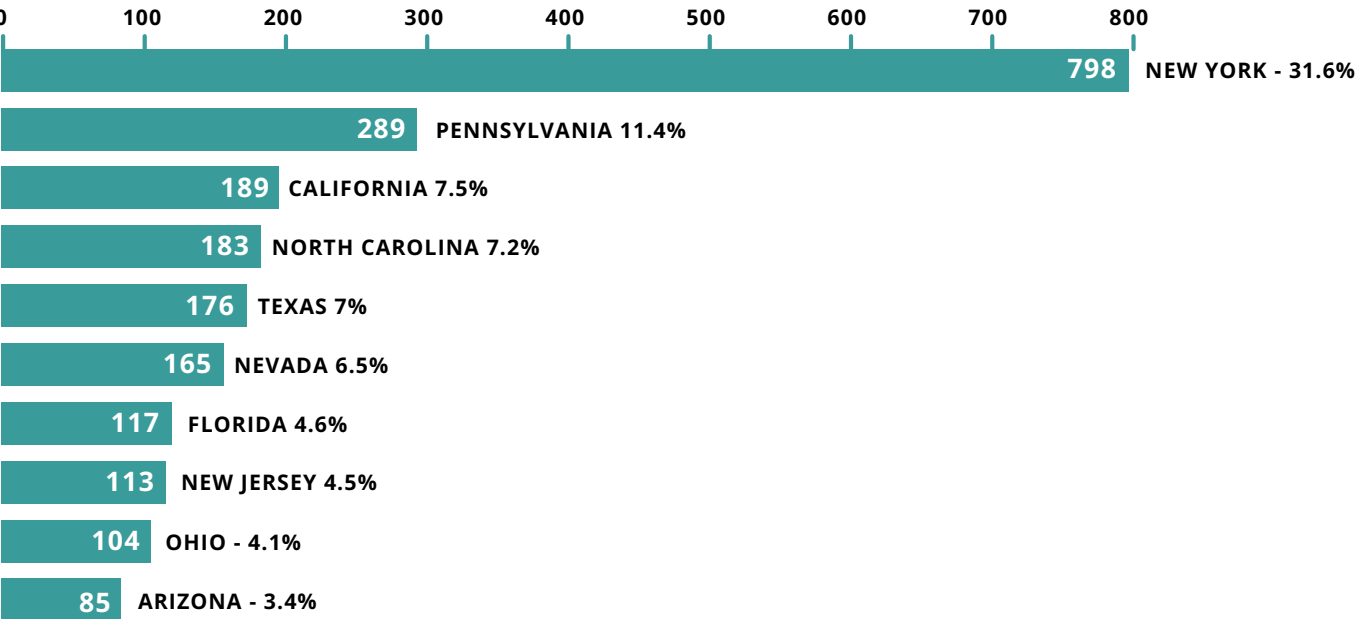


Free Webinars: A Case Study

This year our Professional Learning team provided a series of national webinars free of charge to educators. As of this moment, over 3,200 PreK–12 teachers, administrators, and district leaders from all over the world have attended.

These sessions are practical, designed to ensure direct-to-classroom usefulness for the teachers learning from our team. In August, Peggy Price, Director of the Orton-Gillingham Institute at the Stern Center, led a webinar empowering K-4 educators and administrators with actionable, evidence-based frameworks to maximize every minute within their daily literacy block.

Teachers Attended From: TOP 10 STATES OUTSIDE OF VERMONT



HERE'S JUST SOME OF THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK WE RECEIVED FROM TEACHERS WHO ATTENDED:

"A HIGHLY THOROUGH AND ENTHUSIASTIC WEBINAR."

"THE PRESENTER WAS EXCELLENT; SHE PROVIDED MANY VISUALS EXAMPLES WHICH WERE GREAT. OVERALL, EVERYTHING WAS AWESOME."

"PEGGY WAS AN EXCELLENT PRESENTER- SHE PROVIDED CLEAR INFORMATION AND ALLOWED FOR AS MUCH INTERACTION AS POSSIBLE IN SUCH A SHORT TIME!"

"I AM EXCITED TO BEGIN WORKING WITH STUDENTS TO REINFORCE WHAT I LEARNED."

Generosity & Gratitude

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\$100,000 & UP

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*MULTI-YEAR PLEDGE

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BEST TO LIST GIFTS GIVEN
BETWEEN 9/1/2025 THROUGH
8/31/2026. PLEASE CONTACT
US WITH ANY CORRECTIONS!

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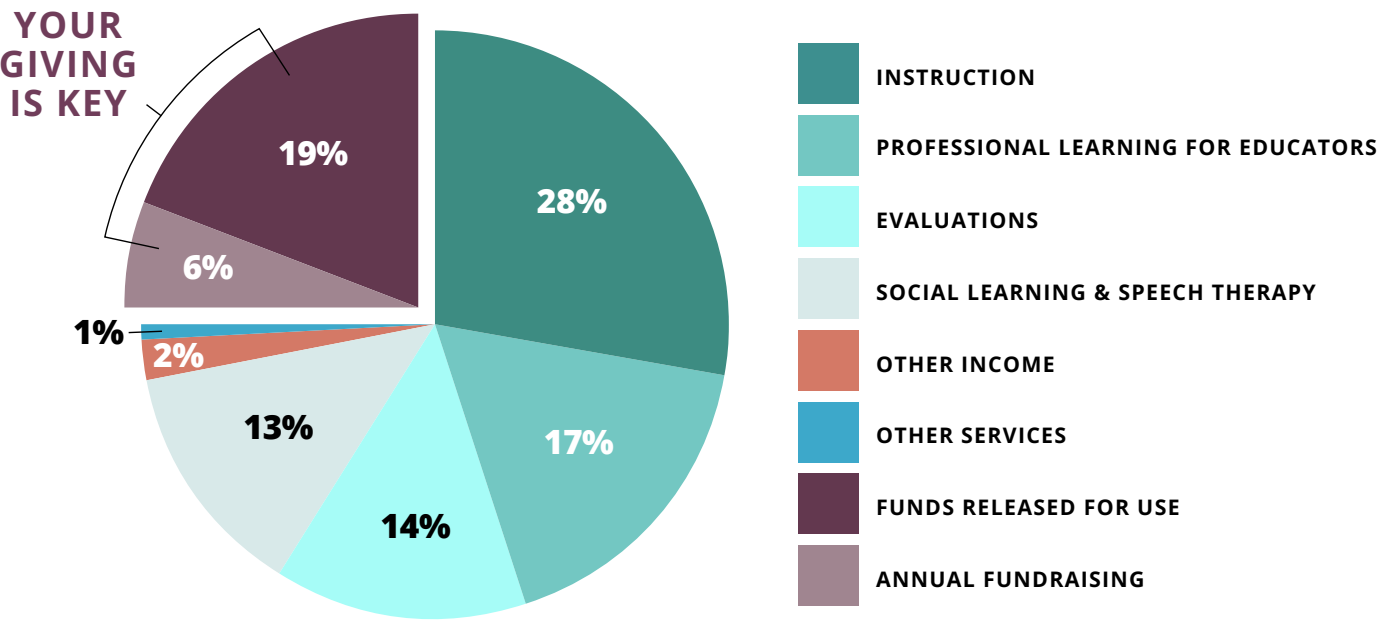
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Sustaining Revenue Sources FY26



FISCAL 2026 SUMMARY

Unrestricted Revenue	\$4,399,198	Operations Expenses	\$4,598,960
Restricted Contribution and Earnings	\$2,613,103	Investment Expenses	\$49,320
TOTAL REVENUE	\$7,012,301	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,639,280
		INCREASE IN NET ASSETS	\$2,373,021

Board of Directors

Our dedicated Stern Center Board Members provide essential leadership and expertise, guiding our nonprofit mission through their volunteer service.



MICHAEL HEALY (TREASURER)
MANAGING PARTNER, IBM

GRATITUDE TO MIKE HEALY

Michael Healy concludes his distinguished decade of Board service in fall 2026. Mike's remarkable mind, financial savvy, business acumen, spot-on questions, and drive to help us improve have been tremendous assets to the Stern Center's success. His genuine support and willingness to help our team for the good of the mission have been unfailing, and Mike set a high bar for Board service. Thank you with all our hearts, Mike!



ADAM WING
(CHAIR)
CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER,
ABLENET, INC.



CARRIE ALEXANDER
(VICE CHAIR)
PARTNER, EDGILITY
TALENT PARTNERS



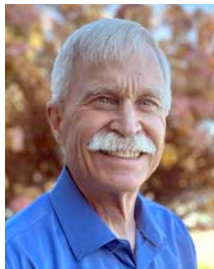
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(SECRETARY)
SENIOR MANAGING
DIRECTOR, TISHMAN SPEYER



CAROL ODE,
J.D.
VERMONT STATE
LEGISLATOR



JUSTIN REIDY
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY
OFFICER, NO DIET
DIETITIAN



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SMITH
RETIRED EDUCATOR AND
FINANCE EXECUTIVE



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CONSULTANT



MATHEW ZAHN, PH.D.
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
GEORGETOWN
UNIVERSITY



APRIL O'DELL
ASSOCIATE VICE
PRESIDENT OF FINANCE,
CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE



MARIBETH
SPELLMAN, J.D.
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
& GENERAL COUNSEL,
VT FEDERAL CREDIT UNION



SARAH HEALY
PRESIDENT,
COMMANDO



LAURIE QUINN, PH.D.
PRESIDENT,
STERN CENTER FOR
LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

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The Blanche Podhajski Institute for Learner Success

President Emerita and founder Blanche Podhajski, Ph.D., who led our nonprofit organization through nearly four decades of its success, has made a powerful philanthropic commitment that will continue to transform the lives of learners through the Stern Center for Language and Learning.

To honor Blanche’s generosity and secure the proud legacy of our founding donors Bernice and Milton Stern, Dr. Peter and Margie Stern matched this remarkable gift. Together, these gifts establish the Blanche Podhajski Institute for Learner Success, to be supported by a \$3 million endowment beginning in late 2028.

Through the Institute, learner success will expand and strengthen at the Stern Center. Endowment proceeds reduce costs for vital specialized services for families whose incomes qualify. Funds will also ensure ongoing innovation in our programs for learners, and support pilots that demonstrate and nurture educational excellence, with a special emphasis on the first service the Stern Center offered when Dr. Podhajski began her storied career: life-changing learner evaluations.



▲ Blanche Podhajski, Ph.D., Stern Center Founder and President Emerita

“Forty-four years ago, I founded the Stern Center based in science and fortified by hope. My vision was to honor learning differences and improve lives. This endowment gift is to extend that intersection of science and hope to future generations of learners and to support the Stern Center’s continuing preeminence as a nonprofit organization dedicated to learning for all.”

— DR. BLANCHE PODHAJSKI



▲ From left: Stern Center President Laurie Quinn, Ph.D., Margie Stern, Peter Stern, M.D., Blanche Podhajski, Ph.D.

“The learners we serve and their families, schools, and communities, have been gifted the opportunity to grow stronger because of Blanche and the Stern family—they opened the path back then, and their generosity shows us the way now. These gifts illuminate a future where learning success becomes affordable for all families. I’m deeply grateful.”

— DR. LAURIE QUINN
STERN CENTER PRESIDENT

“This matching gift to endow the Blanche Podhajski Institute for Learner Success was inspired by our commitment to the next generation, our respect and affection for Blanche, and our confidence in the Stern Center’s bright future as an indispensable nonprofit leader in Vermont and beyond,”

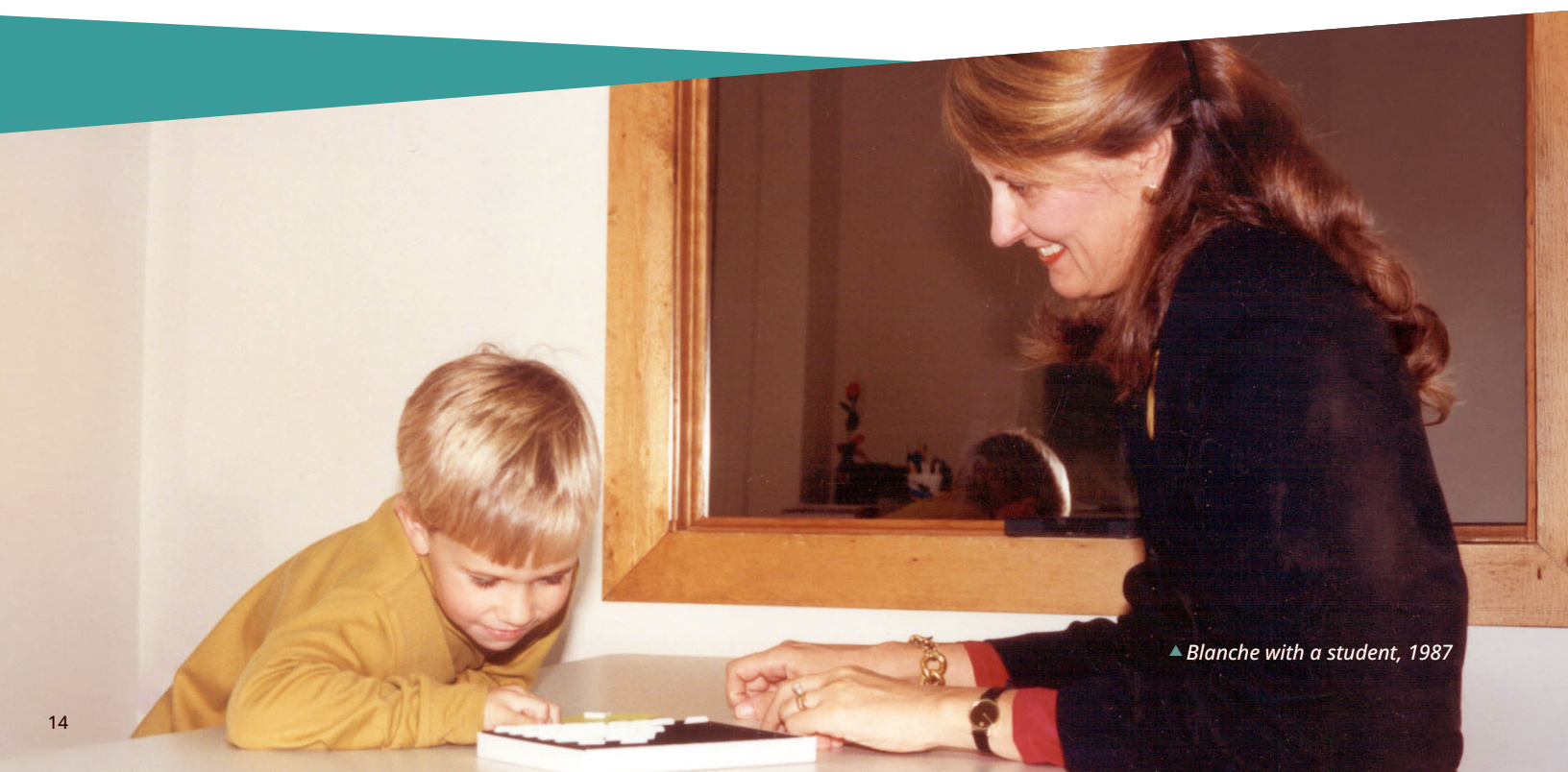
— DR. PETER STERN

HISTORY

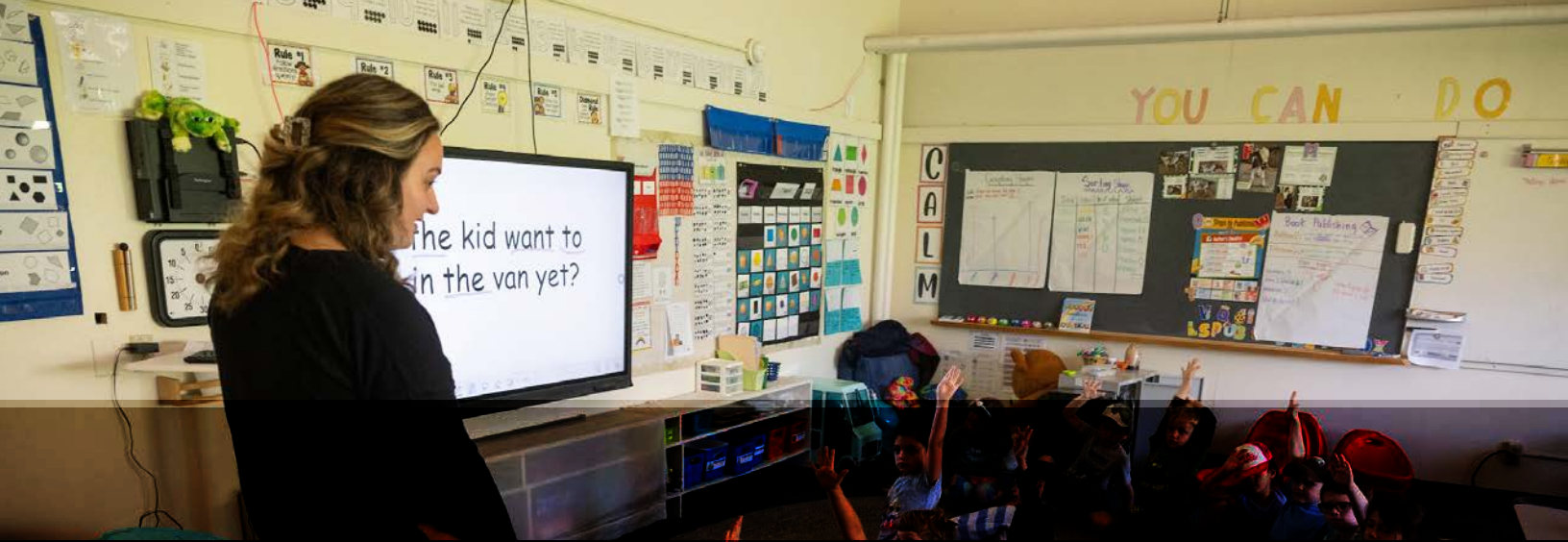
Dr. Blanche Podhajski founded the Stern Center in 1983 with a \$50,000 grant from the Bernice and Milton Stern Foundation. Over 38 years at the helm of the organization, she built it into a nationally recognized resource for evaluation, instruction, and educator excellence, reaching learners and teachers across Vermont and well beyond our borders. Podhajski earned her Ph.D. from Northwestern University in communication disorders, specializing in learning disabilities, and served as Clinical Associate Professor of Neurological Sciences at the University of Vermont College of Medicine. She is co-author of the Sounds Abound Program, lead author of the Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators, and developer of Building Blocks for Literacy®, a program for early childhood educators and parents. In 2015 she received the Turrell Fund’s Champion for Children

Medal of Honor. Podhajski retired in 2021 after a 50-year career in education and holds the honorary role of Stern Center President Emerita.

Peter and Margie Stern have been pillars of the Stern Center since Blanche Podhajski first partnered with Peter’s parents, Milton and Bernice Stern, to launch the organization in 1983. Both have served as Board Chairs — Peter as the Center’s founding Chair — and for more than 40 years have championed its growth and mission. Peter holds the title of Honorary Chair, and both he and Margie remain active in the Stern Center’s success today. The organization that proudly bears the Stern family’s name has flourished through Peter and Margie’s vision, dedication, and stewardship, and they have been essential in changing lives for the better over generations for thousands of learners, their families, and our communities.



▲ Blanche with a student, 1987



Your generosity changes lives through learning.

"The brighter future we're shaping together depends upon facing and responding to the learning crisis of today. When you give, children and families benefit right away. And our communities benefit over many years to come."

— DR. LAURIE QUINN,
STERN CENTER PRESIDENT

WAYS TO GIVE:

- **Their child today, our community tomorrow.**

Provide financial assistance for families based on income, securing the Stern Center services that change lives and strengthen futures.

- **Thanks to you, we'll be ready to help.**

Your support funds about 1/4 of the Stern Center's annual operating needs as a nonprofit.

- **Celebrate a person or milestone.**

Give to honor someone special or to mark a memorable occasion.

- **Ensure learning endures.**

Remember a loved one by helping learners or teachers in their name through memorial giving--or plan a bequest of your own.

We earn our donors' trust and loyalty.



SCAN TO DONATE:

