



launch

2015-2016 Annual Report



# Dear Friends and Supporters:

2015-2016 was an exciting and challenging year!

We saw real progress in our region towards providing equitable access to quality learning programs. It was the first year of the Seattle Preschool Program, which is expanding access to quality early learning. In King County, Best Starts for Kids was approved by voters and will fund and coordinate county-wide services for children from birth through young adulthood.

A challenge that we and others faced this year was the lack of space within Seattle Public Schools (SPS). Due to increased enrollment combined with a legal mandate to reduce K-5 class sizes, SPS was forced to reclaim dedicated space from organizations like ours. It's been and will continue to be a challenge finding affordable space in the community, but thanks to our supporters we've been able to find solutions.

Now more than ever it's vital that Launch continues to offer the programs we do. We see more and more children every day not only struggling to receive a high quality education, but also coping with the legacy of racism, poverty, trauma, and mental illness. We believe we can play a big role in helping children break these cycles and explore their full potential.

Education has long been touted as the "great equalizer", the thing that can shift a child's trajectory in a positive direction, open doors, and help them access more opportunities in life. However, we know that it's not just about education but also social-emotional skills. If a child lacks the skills they need - perseverance, resilience, empathy, self-regulation, confidence, and a strong sense of identity – they'll have difficulty taking advantage of the opportunities that a high-quality education offers. Long-term success is dependent on a child's ability to handle the challenges and barriers that will inevitably cross their path.

We help children develop those vital social-emotional skills, which research shows are just as important as academics in determining success. We believe that if we can teach a child to think critically and how to problem-solve then when they come across a challenge it won't be too big for them to handle and they'll have the confidence to tackle it head-on. Children are our biggest assets and investment in our future and if we don't invest in them now, we're hurting them and ourselves.

Together with our staff, families, partners and donors, we've invested in our children and served our community since 1977. Thank you for supporting our work!



Brianna Jackson  
Executive Director



**Our Mission: Lead the charge to brilliant outcomes for the children of our community by ensuring equitable access to the highest quality learning and care.**



## Our Programs

### Preschool Program

During 2015-2016, our six preschool programs helped 113 children ages 3-5 get ready to enter kindergarten. Our teachers create a safe and nurturing environment for preschoolers to thrive and learn while playing, with lessons driven by each child's needs and interests. Children have opportunities to explore, create, and experience through fun activities including art, music, dance, science, math, cooking, and more.

We use the HighScope curriculum, which is based on research that shows children learn best through play and hands-on activities. For example, a child might learn to count by jumping rope, or learn about science and the environment by taking a walk in the park. Our teachers plan for a variety of experiences that give children opportunities to explore, play, and learn. While they're playing, Launch preschool teachers observe, document, and assess children's strengths, areas of growth, needs and interests. They use that information to plan experiences and support children's learning.

This year we participated in the inaugural year of the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP). SPP provides sliding scale funding for families and sets quality standards for providers. Throughout this first year, we worked closely with the City of Seattle to make adjustments to the program so that it better meets families' needs. We wholeheartedly believe that SPP is making quality preschool more accessible for the families who need it most.

**In 2015-2016, 82% of our preschoolers started kindergarten ready to learn, compared to 52% of entering kindergarteners in Seattle Public Schools.**

## Michael's Story

Michael lacked the skills needed to be kindergarten ready, including social-emotional skills. He was hyperactive, acted out, had trouble listening and following directions, and struggled to manage his emotions. Launch teachers referred him to Public Health and Child Find for assessments and special education services.

In the Launch classroom, our teachers were able to provide individualized lesson plans to help Michael develop his skills – for example, because of his attention span, our teachers created shortened, dynamic lessons to help him focus. Michael made tremendous strides over the last two years in our preschool program! He's now attending an elementary school that provides the more intensive support he needs, but overall Michael is doing well and we believe he's on track for success in school and beyond!



### **Before & After School Program**

During 2015-2016, our before & after school programs served 771 elementary-age children. Our enrichment programs balance staff-led activities, groups and individual pursuits, homework time, and free choice. Children are able to choose from the many games, books, art supplies, and sports equipment we have. They also take part in daily enrichment activities that support what they're learning in school in a fun, hands-on way. Our students created, built, explored, played, and made new friends during the school year while also having the opportunity to express their voices and become leaders.

One of the main goals of our school age programming is to help children succeed in school by helping them develop the social-emotional skills that support academic success. This year we implemented DESSA (Devereux Student Strengths Assessment), which is a research-based assessment completed by the Launch teacher that assesses a child's social-emotional skills compared to typical age-level development.

Over the last several years, we've seen an increase in the number of children in our programs who deal with behavioral or social-emotional challenges. This year we've addressed this by strengthening our practices around Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a framework for teaching, assessment and intervention designed to meet the needs of all children we serve.

We continue to use the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) which is an internal measurement of program quality. Our program staff use the YPQA to identify areas of improvement to help create a participatory, safe, supportive, youth-centered environment. YPQA also helps us determine where our teachers may need professional development.

**In 2015-2016, 96% of our school-age children were assessed as having “Typical” or “Strong” social-emotional skills according to DESSA.**

## Charlie's Story

Charlie attended our before & after school program during his kindergarten year. His challenging behavior of outbursts and physical aggression led to difficulty in school. Charlie is on the autism spectrum and had difficulty self-regulating and often didn't participate or interact with his peers.

Charlie, his parents, and Launch teachers worked together to help him develop the social-emotional skills he needs. Our teachers give him the extra time and the individualized attention he needs and have learned to manage his triggers, such as too much noise or abrupt transitions to new activities. Our teachers anticipate situations that will cause him anxiety and prepare him for them before they occur. They also allow Charlie to step away from the group to calm himself and rejoin the group when ready.

Charlie now has fewer outbursts because he's learned how to control his emotions, is much more responsive to directions, and has developed positive relationships with his peers! These skills have helped him be more successful in school. And although he's attending a different elementary school this year where he can get the services he needs, his parents made arrangements for him to continue to be transported to our after school program because he does so well at Launch.



### Summer Camps

Summer is an incredibly important time for children because they lose academic skills when school is not in session. This summer learning loss is cumulative and worsens every year. We combat this by providing full-day summer learning programs for elementary students. This year, we had 519 children attend our summer school age program.

During the summer, our children had fun while learning through hands-on activities. They took field trips to museums and attractions, visited the beach, played outside, made incredible art, took dance lessons, read new and interesting books, gardened and made new friends. Thanks to partnerships with a number of organizations including the Pacific Science Center, the EMP, the Woodland Park Zoo, the Beacon Food Forest, Massive Monkeys, and the Museum of Flight, our children learned new things about the world and reinforced existing skills. They also had the opportunity to drive lessons and themes based on their interests and needs.

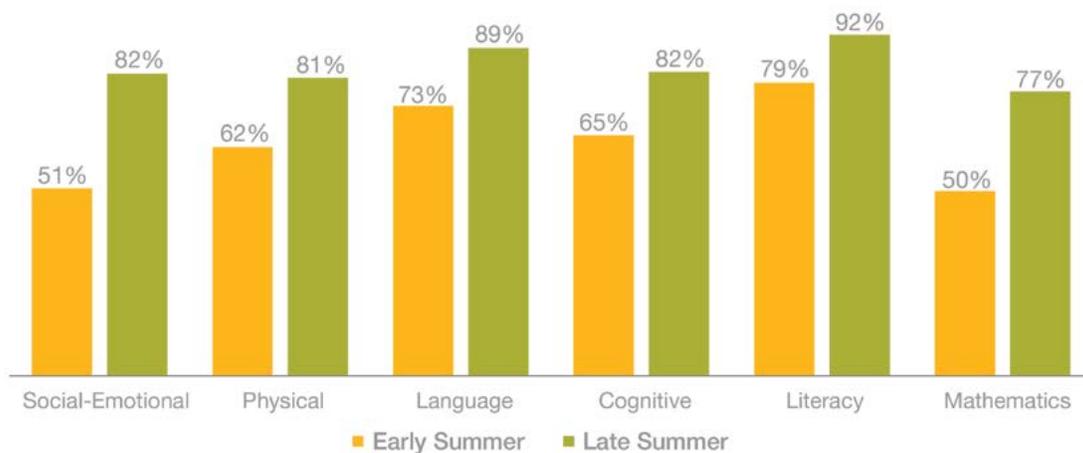
**“My child loves Launch. She loves not only the program, she loves the staff and her friends. She loves the field trips and the learning experience and activities.” - Launch parent**



## Leap Ahead

During 2015-2016, we worked with 127 students in Leap Ahead, our summer kindergarten-readiness program designed to successfully transition children into elementary school. Leap Ahead is especially helpful for children with limited preschool experience or who need more support. Kindergarten is an important transition for children; a successful transition to elementary school increases children's positive outcomes throughout their school years. Research shows that children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds begin school with higher achievement scores than children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. However, this effect can be reduced or eliminated with school readiness and transition programs like Leap Ahead.

During the 10-week Leap Ahead program, our rising kindergarteners get a chance to familiarize themselves with the elementary school's layout and staff. We offer age-appropriate summer activities and field trips, kindergarten classroom tours, and mid-day quiet reading time. At the end of the summer, our children showed growth in all six main kindergarten-readiness indicators.



## Pedro's Story

Pedro attended kindergarten but was so far behind that he was in danger of repeating the grade. He hadn't attended preschool before entering kindergarten and struggled in his academic and social-emotional development. He'd never even held a pencil prior to kindergarten. Pedro also had the added struggle of being an English Language Learner.

He received a need-based scholarship to attend Leap Ahead. Over the 10-week program Pedro was able to get more individualized attention to support his needs. He learned the skills he needed to do well in school and improved his language skills, plus he developed confidence. By the end of Leap Ahead he had progressed enough that he was able to advance to the next grade instead of repeating kindergarten!



## Social-Emotional Skills

One of the most important outcomes of our work is that we help students develop social-emotional skills. The development of skills such as resilience, emotion management, impulse control, empathy, behavior regulation, conflict resolution, and cooperation are critical for children. These skills have a profound impact on children's success in school and beyond.

A vast body of research has shown that children who take part in social-emotional learning programs perform better academically and have fewer behavior problems. Some studies even found that children who received social-emotional learning early in their lives had better outcomes as young adults years later in education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health.

This year, we implemented some new initiatives to support children's social-emotional development under the broader heading of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a framework for teaching, assessment and intervention designed to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. As part of MTSS, during 2015-2016 we implemented the following strategies:

- RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating Emotions), a curriculum which teaches children how to develop emotional intelligence and the "soft" skills that affect long-term success including key emotional management skills such as understanding and regulating emotions.
- Second Step, a preschool and Leap Ahead curriculum that aligns with RULER. Second Step is designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in young children and to increase their levels of social competence by teaching empathy, impulse control, and anger management.
- DESSA, a behavior rating scale that assesses skills related to social-emotional competence, resilience, and academic success of children grades K-5. It helps identify areas of strength and areas of needs and help guide prevention and intervention strategies for both the individual child and the classroom as a whole.
- Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS): PBIS is a proactive school-wide approach that promotes positive behaviors in children. PBIS helps create a consistent set of behavior expectations and rules, reinforces positive behaviors, and creates a continuum of support to address negative behaviors.

**"The Launch program has made such a huge difference in my son's learning and social development." - Launch parent**



## Professional Development & Training

We work hard to hire and retain experienced teachers and staff who reflect the diverse communities we serve. One of the ways we ensure the highest possible program quality is by investing in professional development and training opportunities. We partner with community agencies such as the City of Seattle's Early Education Collaborative (SEEC), School's Out Washington, Seattle-King County Public Health, and Child Care Resources to provide training, coaching, and education opportunities for our teaching staff in a variety of areas including curriculum, behavior management, assessments, youth empowerment, and intervention.

Our participation in the Seattle Preschool Program (SPP) has added some additional educational requirements for our teachers and program directors. Program directors and lead teachers are required to have a bachelors degree in education (e.g., Early Childhood Education), and assistant teachers must have an associate degree in Early Childhood Education or 2 years of Early Childhood Education coursework. Program Directors also are required to have expertise and coursework in Educational Leadership and Business Management.

Our staff who didn't meet these requirements have four years to complete their degrees. We're proud to support them in this endeavor by partnering with North Seattle College, which has created a Bachelor of Applied Sciences degree in Early Childhood Education program that allows teachers to continue work while they complete their degrees. We're helping our teachers while they get their degree including providing flexible scheduling and allowing them to complete their practicum with us. Our Director of Operations is a professor and an advisor for this program!

**During 2015-2016, our teachers received over 4,000 hours of training and professional development.**

# 2015-2016 by the Numbers

**over 1,200**  
children served

**more than 490,000**  
hours of programming provided

**56% of our students**  
were children of color or multiracial

**more than 30% of families**  
received tuition subsidies from the City or  
State because of income

## Revenue

Fee for Service - Other	\$2,196,105
Fee for Service - Seattle Preschool Program	\$833,214
Fee for Service - City of Seattle Other	\$282,143
Fee for Service - DSHS	\$660,369
Grants & Contracts	\$460,424
In-Kind Contributions	\$245,492
United Way	\$107,500
Contributions*	\$62,635
Other	\$4,585

\*Contributions include fundraising event revenue net of expenses

Total Revenue: \$4,852,467

## Expenses

Programs	\$4,081,297
Administration	\$573,122
Fundraising	\$98,787

Total Expenses: \$4,753,206

**In 2015-2016, we provided more than \$315,000 in uncompensated tuition and tuition assistance to lower-income families.**

## Alice's Story

Alice receives tuition assistance from Launch for her 5th grade daughter, who has attended our before & after school and summer programs since preschool. She says:

*"It's been an added financial support I find very blessing. Because any amount I can save helps out tremendously. If I didn't receive it, I definitely would feel more stress by the higher tuition I would need to pay. It not only helps my wallet, but helps my sanity. Because I am not stressing as much about my monthly childcare bill. I can use the money I save towards other bills."*

# Thank you to the generous donors who make our work possible!

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