



Family Connections

Parents and Children
Growing Together

REPORT CARD

Fall
2011

Family Connections in the News...Bringing Our Parents and Our Agency into the Forefront of the Early Childhood Education Community

The cover of the August issue of Parenting on the Peninsula was a dream come true for Family Connections. Not only did it feature one of our special families who have overcome many challenges since first attending our program with their oldest son Roberto Jr., but it identified us to the readers in a way that we truly felt was a statement of who we are "The Educational Engine that Could." The accompanying article which we are re-printing here serves as a reminder of the importance and effectiveness of parent education and more importantly, the unique hands on approach that has been the hallmark of the cooperative preschool model for over 100 years.

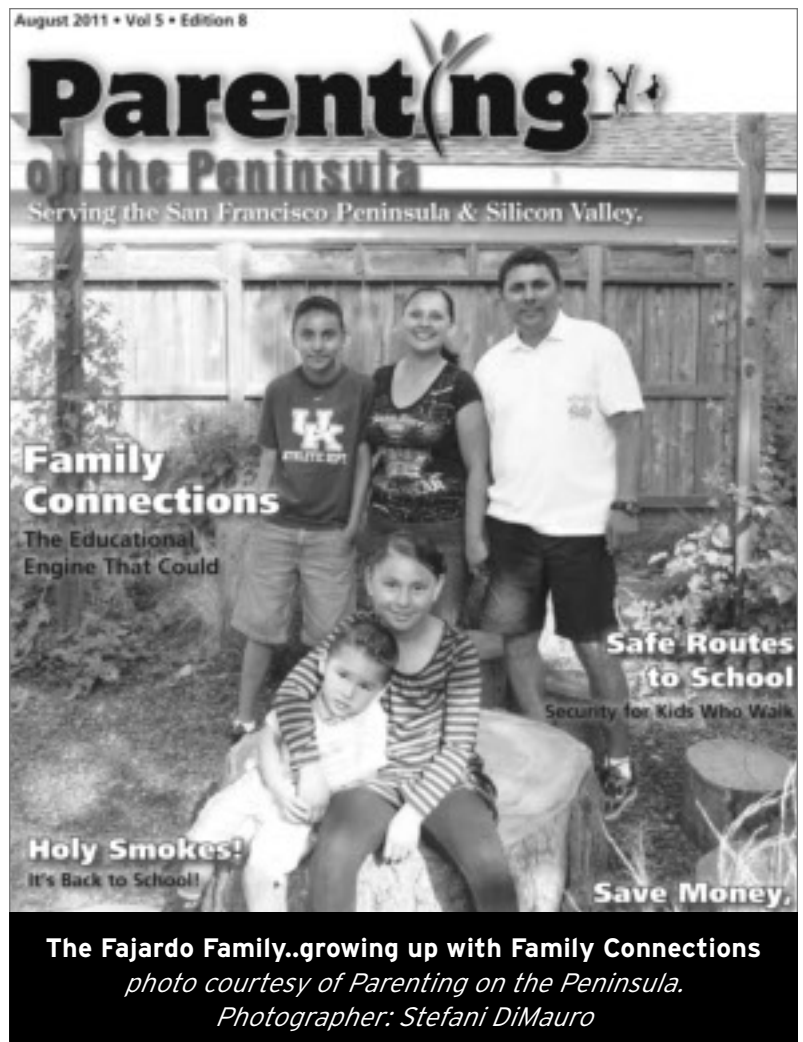
Family Connections... By Evelyn Preston

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Ten years ago, Rosalia Fajardo, featured on the cover, was a shy, lonely, young mother, stuck at home with her two-year-old son, knowing no one after a decade in the area. Her husband Roberto took the lead both in their home and out. Although he begged his wife to enter community life, it wasn't until a flier for the Family Connections preschool program and outside encouragement sparked their role reversal, took hold, and eventually saved Rosalia's mental well-being. Now, three children later, Rosalia passes on the help she received by acting as mentor for other new moms. "She's developed such a strong network and busy social life," Roberto joked, "I used to beg her to go out, and now I'm calling to ask when she'll be home."

Countless other uplifting, enlightening stories flow from the many low income and often immigrant parents who have found their voice and their purpose during almost 20 years as Family Connections participants. This unique pre-school program from infants up to five years old is tuition-free for these underserved families who fall outside the parameters for receiving Federal and State poverty level funding.

Always adhering to the program's strict guidelines set by Sequoia Union High School District's Adult



School, Family Connections achieves its amazing goal to ready children—and their parents—to begin kindergarten on a par with their peers from more mainstream, affluent backgrounds. Beginning in the '90s with 1000 plus children served, currently 400 pre-schoolers take part at three sites in San Mateo County. Family Connections achieves its grand vision: learn, grow, and dream together by blending positive parenting and early childhood development to create lasting success in families, communities, and schools.

This co-op works! Moms and dads, many speaking halting or no English and most struggling for equal socioeconomic footing, participate along with their children. Parents, with heavy work schedules, little assistance, and few



Moms help clean up after the Belle Haven classroom fire.

mentors, learn the importance of play, dealing with sibling rivalry, helping with homework. Becoming serious students themselves, they fundraise via raffles and carnivals, chaperone field trips, join class projects, and regularly aid teachers. For fathers as well as mothers, enrolling as partners from the very first day builds a vibrant community and bridges the isolation gap felt by so many immigrants. Entire families experience the magic of education.

In turn, young children receive the immeasurable gift of their own parents' dedication along with their teachers' passion. Both work to emphasize language development through story telling and constant communication no matter what language. A cautious, fearful child will connect to a book read in class and eagerly interrupt with his own "at my house" tale, proving the power of

the written word. Continuous practice of motor skills and early socializing efforts that start with quiet circle sitting make this critical interaction exciting, effective, and fun. "Family Connections helped us realize how important it is to develop the habit of reading at an early age," says one grateful father. "Our son is now attending one of the best elementary schools in the district."

Although culture, language, and financial problems heavily drag on good intentions, Family Connections breaks through seemingly insurmountable barriers. It wisely starts with meeting basic "outside the classroom" needs including clothing, food, domestic violence prevention, and resource information from insurance to transportation. Families can then shift their energies to focus on the "in-class" educational needs of their children. Facilitating family togetherness recreates the values and purpose found in the meeting houses and social halls of earlier generations. Then as now, the "connection" is not only useful but often life-saving.

An astounding transformation turned Luis, a deaf mute dad, isolated and illiterate, into a strong member of the FC group. When his brothers married and moved away, Luis totally retreated, leaving his wife to take over. Withdrawn and feeling useless, he took their infant son to watch his sibling in the preschool program. Dad noticed the baby so eager to join in, he was devising his own sign language, an inspiration and catalyst for Luis's own motivation to communicate. He's now learning to read and engaged in the total FC program.

A living laboratory, Family Connections facilitates the sharing, skills, and language development that form the whole child and forges confidence leading to a lifetime of success. Parents take pride in their own hard-won knowledge and become vibrant leaders in their community



2011 Summer School participants enjoy their annual train trip to Burlingame's Washington Park.

and natural advocates for their children's educational needs. Over 80% of parents stay involved during the K-12 years and over 60% of fathers remain actively engaged. "I would like to see my children succeed in life, finish their studies, and find a career," says Rosalia Fajardo; "I want them to always be good to people, able to help others in need." Her dreams echo others; FC parents wed their personal desires to the "passing it forward" philosophy of service.

Doing so much on its own, the program still needs heroes. As donations dwindle, foundations, corporate partners, sister schools, service organizations, local agencies, and volunteers support this proven program that creates happier families, instills the importance of academic performance, and reduces future dropout rates. Reviewing the program in depth at www.familyconnections.org, it's impossible to stay unconnected to the excitement and progress of early childhood development at work. Family Connections is a vivid example of taking a giant leap up the learning curve toward a citizenship of equality, the philosophical basis that has marked American Public Education from its idealistic inception.



Note from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

After a successful summer packed with children and families throughout East Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Redwood City, we had an unfortunate incident at the end of the summer when our Belle Haven classroom succumbed to an accidental electrical fire. While we were so very thankful that no children or staff were present at the time, it was sad and difficult to see Teacher Angela's treasured collection of materials and resources lost forever. In true Family Connections spirit however, parents rallied around to help with the clean up and our community of supporters rallied around with donations and other forms of support. We owe a great debt of thanks to the Belle Haven Community School which generously allowed us to relocate into a classroom very close to our former portable. If you are ever in the neighborhood, please be sure to stop by Portable-16 to see our new digs and to say hello.

Speaking of new, I would like to formally introduce our newest board members: Cynthia Becker, Nic Kiyasu and Leslie Mayerson. All three have extensive volunteer experience in the community and have already been put to work on our brand new Night of Dreams fundraiser. Our 10 person board of directors will be working hard this year to: raise awareness, raise funds and raise friends for our organization. If you would like to become more involved but do not have the ability to commit to a full board position, I would like to strongly encourage you to consider joining one of our task-focused committees. Please contact our Board President, Amy Sahn at aesahn@gmail.com today!

On behalf of our staff and board I would like to wish all of you a great 2011-2012 school year. We are looking forward to working with many of you in our classrooms, seeing you at events and continuing to share our good work with you during the year through our email blasts, on Facebook and brace yourselves...even Twitter.

Warm Regards,

Renée Zimmerman
Executive Director

Annual Giving Campaign

The following is a list of individual donors, foundations and corporate funders. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. Please inform us of any errors or omissions so that we may correct our records.

\$20,000+ Funders

Children's Collaborative
Action Team
Silicon Valley Community
Foundation (KTK Contract)
Hurlbut-Johnson Charitable Trusts

Gold Partners (\$5,000-\$15,000)

Anonymous
Atkinson Foundation
Center for Speech, Language, and
Occupational Therapy, Inc.
Franklin and Catherine Johnson
Foundation
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation
Heising-Simons Foundation
Intero Foundation, Inc.
Redwood City Rotary Foundation
(Car Raffle Proceeds)

Silver Partners (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Beth Longwell Foundation
The Carl Gellert & Celia Berta
Gellert Foundation
Kaufman Family Fund
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
Eric and Amy Sahn

Contributors Circle (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

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Kerry Bitner and James Taschetta
David D. Bohannon Organization
Jannelle Fodor
Janet and Richard Hart
Susie and Wiley Hodges
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
Irrevocable Trust of
Rudolph W. Driscoll, Jr.
George and Emily Jaquette
Elizabeth and John Kendall
Menlo Atherton Cooperative
Nursery School
Katie Peters and Ron Scheldrup
Arjun and Cathy Prabhu
Robert English and Anna Zara

Family Circle (\$500 to \$999)

Cris and Todd Adair
Aaron and Lori Bator
Cynthia and David Becker
Curtis S. Chen and Piming Lai
Sian Davies and Nick van Bruggen
Debbie and Paul Denton
Michele Freed and Gary Sprague
Ann Hecht
Little Wonders, A Parent-Child
Center
Alisa and Neil MacAvoy
April and Mike Pardini
The Reading Bug
Joyce Romeo
Kasson and Luke Stone
Trinity Presbyterian Nursery School

Friends (\$100 to \$499)

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Adobe Matching Gift Program
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Eileen and Christopher DiGiorgio
Carol and Louis Ebner
Rabbi Nat and Mimi Ezray
John Floyd and Elizabeth Brenner
Marcel and Lisa Gani
Larry and Trish Goity
Google Matching Gifts Program
Beebe Gorrie
Laura Hale
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Lenore Horowitz
Craig and Margaret Isaacs
Sybille Katz
Gretta Keegan
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Nic and David Kiyasu
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RJ and Chris Ligtenberg
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Stuart & Meg McLaughlin
Laurel Morris-Wessler
Clarissa Naftzger
Sigrid Jacobsen and
Mike Neunfinger
Bill Nicolet
Jennifer Overholt
Gregory and Jean Oxton
Lisa Meltzer Penn and
Jonathan Penn
Tami Raubvogel
Redwood Parents Nursery School
Michelle Rohrer
Perryn and Timothy Rowland
Laurie Rubenstein-Medina
Anne Rudolph
Lucas Sahn
Marcy Segre
Debbie Siefert
JoAnn Sockolov
Genaro Solorio
Stellar Solutions Foundation
Celine Takatsuno
Rachel Tasch
Mabry Tyson
Anna and Jeffrey Weidell
Jenny Wucher
Lynette and Tim York
John and Renee Zimmerman

Supporters (Up to \$99)

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Christina Thorson
Sol and Christine Varon
Margarita Ventura
Luis and Connie Viveros
Loree Watanabe and Bret Flesner
Lisa and Darrow Wehara
Marti Worshtil

Family Connections also thanks "An Evening with Children's Authors" sponsors and attendees and "Toyota Prius" raffle ticket purchasers.

In Kind Contributions - Thank you to the many individuals and businesses who contributed throughout the year.

The following is a list of larger In Kind donations:

Bring Me a Book Foundation
Burlingame Mothers Club
(Kindergarten Graduation Bags)
Look Design (Graphic design)
Ravenswood City School District
(Facility Space)
Second Harvest Food Bank
Sequoia Union High School District
(facility space)

Thank you to those who supported our efforts to rebuild the Belle Haven Classroom

Monetary Support

Anonymous	Jaime and Esther Pinkus
Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation	Tracy Plowman
Susie and Wiley Hodges	Julieta Vilches
Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund	Jackie Weiler
Janet Hart	Adrienne Addicott
San Mateo Credit Union	Mary Burns
Karin Anger	Cindy Donaldson
Eric and Amy Sahn	Ronni Haderle
Sally Falkenhagen	Jennifer O'Connell
Karen Miel	Nancy Swanson
Peninsula Covenant Preschool	Rebecca Nixon
Laurie Rubenstein-Medina	Lucia Panini
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Linda Burt	
Lisa Costello	
Craig and Margaret Isaacs	
Jan Kang	
Jennifer Larson	
Alicia McLucas	
Jessica Mihaly	
Lynn and Jeff Pierce	

Other Support and In-Kind Donations

Nancy Ar buckle	Nic Kiyasu	Amy Shaw
Andre Ballard	Sharon Lahey	Susan Solinsky
Ruth Bennett	Danna Leahy	St. Paul's Nursery School
Beth Jacob Preschool	Sharon Levine	Sally Stewart
Bunker Hill Parent Participation Nursery School	Anne Lynde	Denise Touhey
Carillon Preschool	Menlo Atherton Cooperative Nursery School	Kim Tramel
Carlmont Parent's Nursery School	Millbrae Nursery School	Trinity Presbyterian Nursery School
Linda Contreras	Regina Neu	Carol Walls
Lionel de Maine	Angela Nuttman	Pam Wattenbaker
Kristin Dokoza	Claire Owens and Eric Hoover	Jackie Weiler
Nancy Ehat	Tovis Page	Catharine Williams
Josette Ferrer	Graham Parry	Windmill School
Melissa Frank	Phillips Brooks School	Woodside Parent's Nursery School
Eric and Emily Getter	Lynn Pierce	Young Men's Service League
Jill Goldsmith	Christine Pietro	Zaino Family
Gretchen Graves	Tracy Plowman	
Marlena and Tim Griffin	Sandy Raskin	
Elizabeth Harris	Kim Ricket	
Vicki Harrison	San Mateo County Office of Education	
Susie HodgesIHSD/Head Start	Emily Scheinmann	
Nancy Kessler		

We apologize for any omissions to this list. We appreciate each and every donation to Family Connections.



New Belle Haven Classroom...A Work in Progress

YMSL Volunteers Help at Family Connections Summer Preschool

The Peninsula Chapter of Young Men's Service League (YMSL) is a mother-son organization dedicated to serving non-profit organizations in local communities, from Menlo Park to South San Francisco. This year, YMSL volunteers are lending a hand at the Family Connections summer preschool program held at the Menlo Park facility. Mothers and their teenage sons help with set up, clean up, enjoy opportunities to play with the children in the sand box, at the water play tables, at the Playdoh activity area and assist in various art and music activities.

"It's fundamental to teach teenagers the value of giving back to others and the benefits of contributing to their community. This is our chapter's inaugural year, we currently have 80 members, and are very excited to work with such wonderful non-profit organizations, like Family Connections," states Terri Murai, VP of Philanthropy, YMSL Peninsula Chapter.



Volunteer from the Young Men's Service League enjoys playing with students from the Family Connections' Summer School Program

Volunteer Assistant Teacher Joins Family Connections

When Family Connections eliminated its Assistant Teacher position due to budgetary constraints we were worried about the many important elements that the position has brought to the classroom. The Assistant Teacher position focuses on English Language acquisition, our Virtual Pre-K curriculum (conducting activities in the classroom that parents model at home) and performing ongoing classroom administrative duties such as art activity and snack preparation.

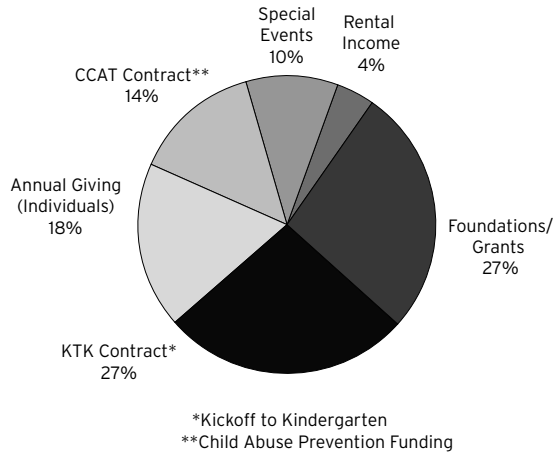
Very fortunately an occasional volunteer named Vanessa Drebin, came forward to offer her services as the "Volunteer" Assistant Teacher! Vanessa has a strong background as a former kindergarten teacher and with three "nearly" grown children she has the time and believe it or not, the energy, to dedicate herself to our program.



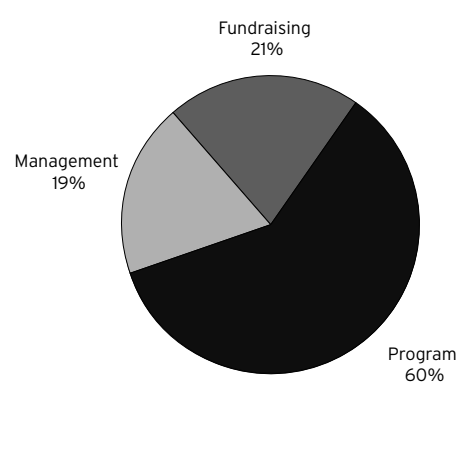
New Assistant Teacher Vanessa Drebin is volunteering her time in the three Family Connections classrooms

2011/2012 Family Connections Agency Profile

FY 11-12 Planned Income Support

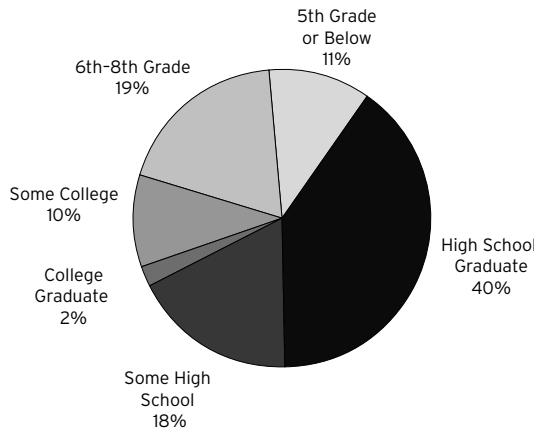


FY 11-12 Planned Functional Expenses

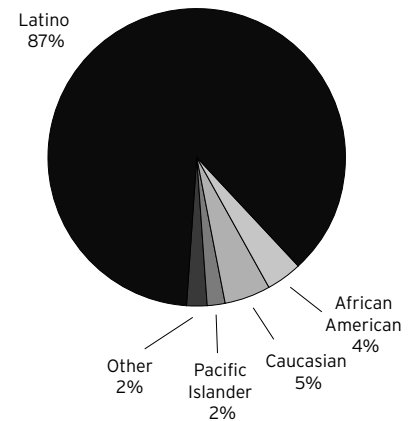


2011 Parent & Child Profile

Education Level of Parents



Participant Ethnicity



School Districts Served

Ravenswood City School District
Redwood City School District

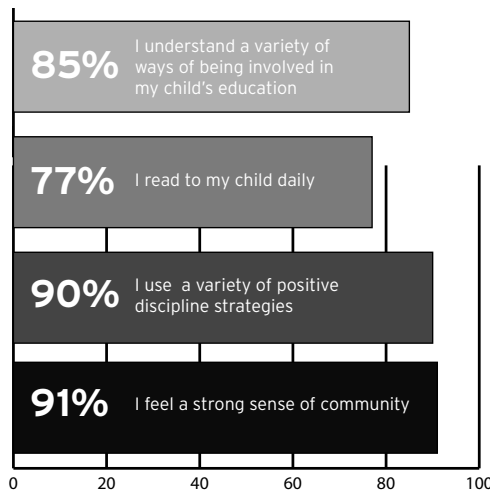
Total Number of Individuals Served

Children 249
Adults 428

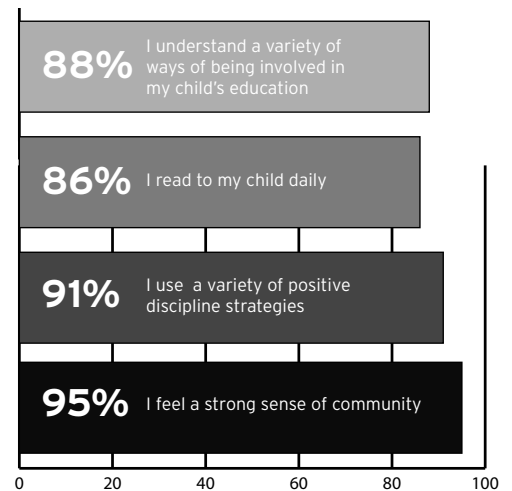
KTK Summer Transition Program

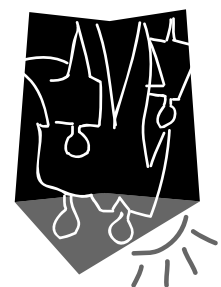
Children 200
Classrooms 10

2010 Parent Survey Responses



2011 Parent Survey Responses





Family Connections

Mailing Address:
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 P.O. Box 358
 San Carlos, CA 94070
 Site Locations:
Belle Haven School
 Menlo Park
414 Fourth Avenue
 Redwood City
1070 Beech Street
 East Palo Alto

Parents and Children Growing Together

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If you know of someone who would be interested in receiving the Report Card, please let us know. Or, if you received this newsletter and would like your name removed from our mailing list, contact us at 650.369.6467 or director@familyconnections.org. Thank you to LOOK-Agency for our newsletter design and layout.

Night of Dreams Recognition Event Honored Alisa Greene MacAvoy, Little Hands and the Intero Foundation



This year we took a break from our Evening with Children's Authors to hold a very special fundraiser called "Night of Dreams." This event was designed to formally recognize an individual, community organization and funder who have contributed to our success. As we head into our 19th year of strengthening underserved parents and children in our community through parent education, parent leadership and preschool education, our board and staff felt that this event was long overdue. Our 2011 honorees were Alisa Greene MacAvoy - Outstanding Volunteer, Little Hands - Outstanding Community Volunteer, and Intero Foundation - Outstanding Foundation Volunteer.

Please visit our Facebook page for more details and photos at www.facebook.com/peninsulafamilyconnections.

Our Mission

To establish the resources and broad recognition to be the first place that low-income families go for early childhood and parent education - empowering children and their parents to learn, grow and dream.

Our Vision

To foster the potential of our community's youngest at-risk children and their families by giving them the skills to succeed and the confidence to have a positive impact on the world.

Board of Directors:

Amy Sahn - *President*
 Leslie Mayerson
 Joyce Romeo
 Denise Touhey
 Lynette York
 Nic Kiyasu

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