Dear Friends,

2017 was a remarkable year at CLI. It was our first year working with Broward County Public Schools, Elizabeth Public Schools, and the Houston Independent School District. We expanded partnerships with Denver Public Schools and the School District of Philadelphia. In all, we worked in 23 school districts; focused on helping teachers use and refine instructional strategies proven to help children learn how to read and write.

A little more than three years ago, achieving this level of scale was just a plan. At that time, we set to work turning an ambitious three-year strategic plan into reality. The focus of the plan was growth with impact and it charted a course for CLI to shift from being a strong regional organization to a strong national organization. Three years later, I am proud to say that we have tripled our reach, serving well over 60,000 students. Evaluations of our impact meet the most rigorous standards and demonstrate our ability to help teachers improve their teaching so that more children improve their reading and writing. We were tremendously honored to receive the highest award by the Library of Congress for our impact on early literacy across the United States.

There is still so much more to do. In this annual report, you have the opportunity to read about how we are going to expand our impact to over 100,000 children with our latest three-year strategic plan. The words, “Growth with Impact,” still ring true. The stories in the following pages create a vivid picture of what is possible when thoughtful partners join together to support great teaching and accelerated learning. From hearing from second grader Ingrid, to learning about our incredible partnerships with districts and our generous supporters, we hope you are moved to join us as we build a national community for literacy.

Joel Zarrow, Ph.D.
Chief Executive Officer

Dear Friends.

The mission of Children’s Literacy Initiative strikes a personal chord with me. As a young boy, I struggled to read all the way through elementary school. It was not until my parents found a teacher equipped with deep literacy expertise and a range of instructional strategies did reading begin to click. Mrs. Elliott helped me learn to read and gave me the confidence to become a lifelong learner, thinker, and problem solver. Because reading and writing are such critical life skills, I shudder to think what my life would be like if I had not been fortunate enough to have been Mrs. Elliott’s student. I deeply believe that every single student deserves to have a teacher like Mrs. Elliott.

The business community is certainly taking notice of the importance of ensuring students have access to high-quality early literacy education. In a recent report produced by the Business Roundtable, CEO’s representing every major industry conclude, “Improving third grade reading proficiency offers a uniquely powerful lever to address many aspects of the skills gap over the long term. Students who develop strong reading skills at an early age are much more likely to graduate from high school and seek postsecondary education and training...In fact, the economic returns from reading proficiently are higher in the United States than in nearly every other developed country.”

While the report emphasizes the importance of reading in economic terms, reading proficiency impacts every aspect of our society and democracy.

When I learned about the work being done at Children’s Literacy Initiative, I decided to get involved. Six years later, I am extremely honored to serve as Children’s Literacy Initiative’s next Board Chair. I am grateful to Christine S. Beck, CLI’s outgoing Chair, whose leadership has enabled CLI to expand and thrive. Chris would be the first to say that nobody succeeds at such complicated work alone; it takes partners of all varieties. I invite you to become a partner and learn about Children’s Literacy Initiative and to get involved in creating the kinds of opportunities that great teachers, like Mrs. Elliott, create for their students.

David J. Bloom
Incoming Chair, Board of Directors
Children’s Literacy Initiative is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works with pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade teachers to improve instruction so that children become powerful readers, writers, and thinkers.

Our goal is to close the literacy achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more affluent peers.

- **We Coach Teachers** one-on-one and in small groups in the classroom — providing demonstrations and feedback that help teachers incorporate effective literacy practices into their daily work with students.
- **We Stock Classrooms** with learning materials and collections of high-quality children’s literature.
- **We Provide Workshops & Seminars** to build teacher’s knowledge of literacy content and pedagogy. We also extend our services with online professional development resources.

By helping educators learn high-impact instructional strategies and nurturing dynamic professional learning communities, CLI builds lasting capacity in teachers and principals over time.

CLI works with district partners to create sustainable organizational processes that continue the trajectory of improvement in schools. Building a teacher’s instructional expertise impacts student learning over the course of a teacher’s career.

CLI has been awarded the 2017 David M. Rubenstein Prize, the top honor in the Library of Congress Literacy Awards program.

The prize is awarded to an organization that has made outstanding and measurable contributions in increasing literacy levels and has demonstrated exceptional and sustained depth and breadth in its commitment to the advancement of literacy.
Great teachers, Great instruction, Better results

CLI Coaching

Our core belief is in the power of great teachers involved in great instruction. Great teachers are the single most important factor in improving student outcomes. When teachers are expert in their instruction, children’s lives change. This is why CLI holds the relationship between teacher and coach sacred. Take the teachers we work with in Elizabeth, NJ. Teachers overwhelmingly believe in the teacher/coach dynamic we establish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLI Coaching: Elizabeth, NJ</th>
<th>CLI Practices: Houston</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% 90%</td>
<td>100% 96%</td>
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CLI coaching has had a positive impact on my professional development.
The relationship I have with my CLI coach is a safe environment in which to receive critical feedback.
My CLI coach helps promote a positive learning environment.
I use CLI strategies in my classroom (agree responses).
How often do you implement one or more CLI early literacy practices in your teaching (at least one per week)?

CLI Practices

CLI coaches and teachers establish a trusting relationship to support teachers during the stage of learning with the steepest learning curve, implementation. Employing a new teaching strategy in the classroom is far more difficult than learning the strategy itself, and CLI-coached teachers in Houston have been able to implement our strategies and practices with ease thanks to one-on-one coaching.

Student Progress

As a result, teachers are able to report improvements in their students’ early literacy skills after just a year of CLI intervention.

Student Progress: Denver

Percentage of teachers that agreed with the following statement: My students made progress in their literacy skills in the 2016-17 school year.

- 93%
Growth at Holm Elementary

Our services can help a good school become great. Holm Elementary in Denver, Colorado is a great example of this. In the 2015-16 school year, prior to working with CLI, Holm scored at 73.5%, qualifying as “Meets Expectations” for their School Performance Framework rating. The following school year, 2016-17, following a full year of working with CLI, Holm scored at 80.94%, qualifying as “Distinguished”, the highest possible rating.

District-wide Impact in Philly

Committed and widespread CLI implementation within a district can lead to improvements in student achievement. We have worked within a majority of School District of Philadelphia K-3rd grade classrooms since 2015. With our help, third graders’ English Language Arts proficiency levels improved 5 percentage points — from 30% in 2015-16 to 35% in 2016-17.

CLI at Plantation Elementary

At Plantation Elementary in Broward County, Florida we made great strides in student achievement. In the two years before CLI implementation, there was steady improvement, increasing from 20% to 28%. In 2016-17, Plantation’s student achievement increased to 56% after one full year of CLI implementation.
We are at work creating a national community of teachers, coaches, district and school leaders, advocates and donors who are collaborating to improve instruction so that children can become powerful readers, writers, and thinkers. Our theory of action shows that when teachers receive the right combination and intensity of training and coaching, they become exemplary instructors.

The following stories are highlights of our work, its impact, and the community we are building across the country.
Ingrid is a proud 2nd grader who loves to read. When asked to name her favorite book, she will tell you that she has many, but her most favorite book right now is *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds. *The Dot*, part of the Children’s Literacy Initiative Spanish language book collection, is about a little girl who doesn’t believe that she can draw until her teacher helps her believe in herself.

Reading didn’t always come easy for Ingrid. She struggled with long words and words that contain the letter H. Originally from Mexico, Ingrid is an English Language Learner accustomed to a phonetic language that makes decoding longer words easier, and it does not have any voiceless sounds, like the letter H sound in English. In her native language, the letter H is silent (except when it’s part of the digraph ch).

Ingrid’s teacher, trained by CLI and using our Spanish and English book collections, worked with Ingrid to help her learn – and love – to read. In addition to reading, Ingrid enjoys writing stories that feature her family, her big brother and sister, mom and dad, and dogs Vivi, Luna, and Casper.

English Language Learners like Ingrid are the fastest growing segment of the student population in the United States. Children’s Literacy Initiative works with school districts with large populations of English Language Learners, and we tailor our services to meet their unique needs.
School districts are critical partners with Children’s Literacy Initiative, as demonstrated by the successful launch of our Investing in Innovation (i3) Scale-up project in four urban school districts, including Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) in Florida, during the 2016-17 school year. BCPS Superintendent of Schools Robert W. Runcie, and district leaders, embraced our i3 project in seven district schools, as it aligned with existing early literacy goals and objectives within the district. “Ensuring our students have the skills they need to be independent readers by third grade is vital to their overall educational success,” said Superintendent Runcie at a September 2017 launch event.

Over the course of the year, supported by Superintendent Runcie and district administrators, CLI provided 140 kindergarten through third grade teachers with personalized, one-on-one teacher coaching, research-based literacy training, high-quality children’s books, and other literacy materials. With the district’s backing, CLI’s Regional Manager in Broward developed a close working relationship with BCPS early learning leaders to ensure that our professional development stayed aligned with district and school goals. In addition, several members of the community-based Broward Reads Campaign for Grade Level Reading, including Children’s Services Council of Broward County, the A.D. Henderson Foundation and United Way of Broward County, became direct supporters of CLI.

As the first of three years of our work with Broward teachers in the i3 Scale-up project drew to a close, Superintendent Runcie noted, “This year, the elementary school that made the greatest gains across the District is supported by CLI.”
Chicago may be known as the City of Big Shoulders, but it’s also a city of people with big hearts. When the Children’s Literacy Initiative team in Chicago put out the word that it was looking for ambassadors to help get a local leadership effort off the ground, Lori Taylor, Associate and Business Litigation Attorney at Foley & Lardner, LLP, answered the call: “I wanted to get involved with Children’s Literacy Initiative because reading is so important for the development and future success of children. I felt it would be a way for me to make a difference and create a brighter future for students in under-served communities.”

Over the past year, Lori has been instrumental in helping Children’s Literacy Initiative raise visibility for our work in Chicago. She is a founding member of the CLI Chicago Community Council, which is committed to supporting our work in high-need elementary schools across the city. In addition, Lori has helped CLI raise money to put more high-quality and diverse children’s books into schools. Thanks to her efforts, we were able to purchase specially curated collections of children’s books for students in three schools served by Children’s Literacy Initiative. We are very grateful to have such an amazing ambassador in Chicago helping to raise visibility and resources so that more kids are leaving third grade able to read proficiently.

Thank you, Lori!
Steadfast Support

The William Penn Foundation is one of Children’s Literacy Initiative’s longest-standing and most transformative supporters. For decades, the Foundation has helped accelerate CLI’s ability to expand and strengthen our impact to reach thousands more teachers and students. Embedded deeply in Philadelphia’s early learning ecosystem, the Foundation has championed our successes while pushing us to improve.

The Foundation funded projects that helped us refine our model of service and position us to win two Investing in Innovation (i3) grants from the U.S. Department of Education, validating our approach and expanding our work nationally.

Beginning in 2015 and ending in 2017, the William Penn Foundation supported CLI’s pilot of sustainability best practices in 15 Philadelphia schools. This project strengthened our instructional leadership development approach and our collaborative professional development to help teachers improve their lesson design—learnings that are now used in CLI’s work across the country.

In 2017, the William Penn Foundation, along with The PEW Fund for Health and Human Services and other donors, enabled CLI to launch a $2 million, three-year project to evaluate the impact of CLI’s Blueprint for Early Literacy Pre-K curriculum coupled with CLI professional development in 35 Pre-K classrooms serving high-need Philadelphia neighborhoods. The study’s results about our impact on teacher practice and student learning will inform Pre-K stakeholders and guide our future development of Blueprint and Pre-K services nationwide.

Children’s Literacy Initiative would like to thank The William Penn Foundation for its 2017 investment and its steadfast support of the teachers and students we serve.

Game Changing Blueprint

District leaders in Elizabeth, NJ Public Schools know that expert instruction is game changing in Pre-K. During the 2016-17 school year, teachers in 11 Elizabeth Pre-K classrooms used our Blueprint for Early Literacy curriculum, providing a detailed set of plans for delivering excellent early literacy instruction.

With an ability to flexibly integrate with other Pre-K curricula, Blueprint is an early literacy supplement that uses over 100 high-quality children’s books to create a high-interest, literate, and vibrant classroom.

“Our teachers have seen an enthusiasm for learning in their four-year-old students in ways they have never experienced before in their professional teaching careers,” said Elizabeth Public Schools Supervisor of Early Childhood, Gissela Barnas. Elizabeth is partnering with CLI to bring Blueprint to more Pre-K classrooms using district funding and philanthropic support.

Elizabeth Pre-K teachers Anna Rigopoulis and Debbie Spiegel became fans of Blueprint’s high-quality children’s literature, themed teachers’ manuals, instructional tools and strategies, games and songbooks, and interactive literacy activities. “Having the Blueprint program in our classrooms has enhanced our teaching focus and style,” they report. “We also see growth and enthusiasm in our students. Our wish would be for the Blueprint program to be expanded into all early childhood classrooms so they may also experience the wonder of it.”
Investing to Maximize Impact

Children’s Literacy Initiative is grateful to the Target Corporation for its generous investment in the teachers and students we serve. From Philadelphia to Chicago, our partnership with Target has fueled tremendous program growth over the past decade, as Children’s Literacy Initiative grew from a regional organization to a national operation. Target was particularly instrumental in ensuring our ability to achieve growth with impact in Chicago, where its investment helped provide students in high-need elementary schools across the city with the high-quality teaching and books they need to be successful.

Principal Sarah Abedelal of Brennemann Elementary School in Chicago saw this impact firsthand:

“Target’s investment and partnership has had a profound impact on Brennemann School’s Learning Community. Because of Target’s unrelenting pursuit to empowering and educating young people, Brennemann School saw its students propelled to reach greater heights. There is no doubt in my mind that, because of Target’s funding and partnership with CLI, the students of Brennemann School will go on to lead better lives: THANK YOU TARGET!”

“There is no doubt in my mind that, because of Target’s funding and partnership with CLI, the students of Brennemann School will go on to lead better lives.” —Principal, Sarah Abedelal, Chicago
We sat down with Leah Eller, a kindergarten teacher at Green Valley Elementary, and asked her to share her experience working with CLI and the impact it has had on her students and professional development.

The training that I have received from Children’s Literacy Initiative has helped me really target the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) while creating a meaningful message/connection that students are able to understand and apply through my Intentional Read Alouds (IRAs). I have been able to create a positive classroom culture that cultivates fun, collaboration, language acquisition, and an inspiration for the love of reading.

Through consistent coaching and collaboration, my students and I have really found a love for reading where students are excited to gather around and learn through a read aloud.

I have learned that you can create and use mentor texts that students love. When returning to a text, students can gain a deeper understanding of complex texts because the content is familiar and they can connect their learning to the standards.

My current favorite is Mostly Monsterly by Tammi Sauer. The creativity and language play are a great way to increase student vocabulary. I can’t wait to read it with my students and see their receptive and expressive vocabulary increase.

The coaching and trainings that Children’s Literacy Initiative has provided has helped me improve my teaching methods and student successes. Children’s Literacy Initiative has provided me with tools that are easy to use and backed by research. It has also provided me with a network of educators and coaches who share my same passion and are always thinking of ways to put students first. Without the donations, these successes wouldn’t be possible – thank you! You are truly helping make schools great and helping to inspire future readers and authors!
Ambitious Undertaking

Ten thousand more children reading at grade-level each year. Over 120,000 high-quality books to low-income classrooms. Four thousand teachers developing their skills as teachers, ensuring students have the opportunity to read, write, and think critically. This is what CLI will make happen in the next three years.

We are undertaking an ambitious course of action, detailed in our latest strategic plan, Read All About It: Impact and Growth 2021. We are building on our proven approach to helping teachers create classrooms where student learning thrives.

At the center of this approach is effective literacy coaching. Whether through our extensive team of highly trained early literacy coaches or working with districts and charter management organizations to improve their approach to early literacy coaching, we are determined to ensure that all teachers have the support they need to make certain that all students have the support they need.

One deceptively simple question drives our innovation throughout the strategic plan: how do we know?

How do we know what great early literacy instruction looks like?

Over the next three years, CLI will produce another two hundred and fifty professional quality videos showing what research based early literacy instruction looks like in action for use in our online Literacy Education and Resources Network - LEARN (learn.cli.org), social media outreach, and CLI trainings. We already have over 24,000 unique users accessing our free LEARN early literacy content online. By 2021, teachers and literacy coaches across the country will have access to a free online course of study designed to give them the knowledge they need to be early literacy experts.

How do we know CLI’s methods are improving early literacy instruction?

Ultimately, early literacy instruction is only great if all students are succeeding. On the way to improved student outcomes, we need to make explicit the improvements in teacher practice that will enable students to get there. That’s why we are developing DELTA – Descriptors for Early Literacy Teacher Achievement. This teacher observation tool measures teacher practice improvement, giving teachers and coaches the data they need for continuous improvement.

How do we know CLI’s early literacy coaching is effective?

CLI is developing the Coaching Support System, a web-based platform for coaches to capture notes, direct teachers to the instructional resources on LEARN immediately relevant to coaching conversations, and track teacher progress as revealed by DELTA. In other words, the Coaching Support System integrates the tools and resources coaches need to be effective at their work.
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<td>Children’s Literacy Initiative</td>
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Financial Summary

With only 14.25% of expenses going to administration and fundraising costs, 85.75% of all expenses were dedicated solely to CLI programming.

Children’s Literacy Initiative’s sound fiscal management practices and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a Gold Participant rating from GuideStar, the world’s largest source for information on nonprofit organizations. In addition, the University of Pennsylvania’s Center for High-Impact Philanthropy identified CLI as an organization where charitable dollars can do the most good. Their evaluation is based on four key strengths:

- CLI results are externally evaluated.
- CLI programs are evidence based.
- CLI’s approach is cost effective.
- CLI leverages public investments already made by increasing the productivity of existing teachers.

Revenue

- Private Philanthropy $4,495,940
- Government $4,242,010
- School District Contracts $11,725,649
- Investment Income $122,782
- Total Revenue $20,586,381

Expenses

- Program $17,255,938
- Administrative $1,651,044
- Fundraising $1,216,300
- Total Expenses $20,123,282

Change In Net Assets $463,099

Total Ending Net Assets $7,480,326
Thank You Supporters

Children’s Literacy Initiative is proud to acknowledge the following individuals and institutional donors for their generosity and commitment to setting young students on a path to future success in school and life.

$1,000,000 OR MORE
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The William Penn Foundation

$500,000 TO $999,999
Denver Public Schools Foundation*
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