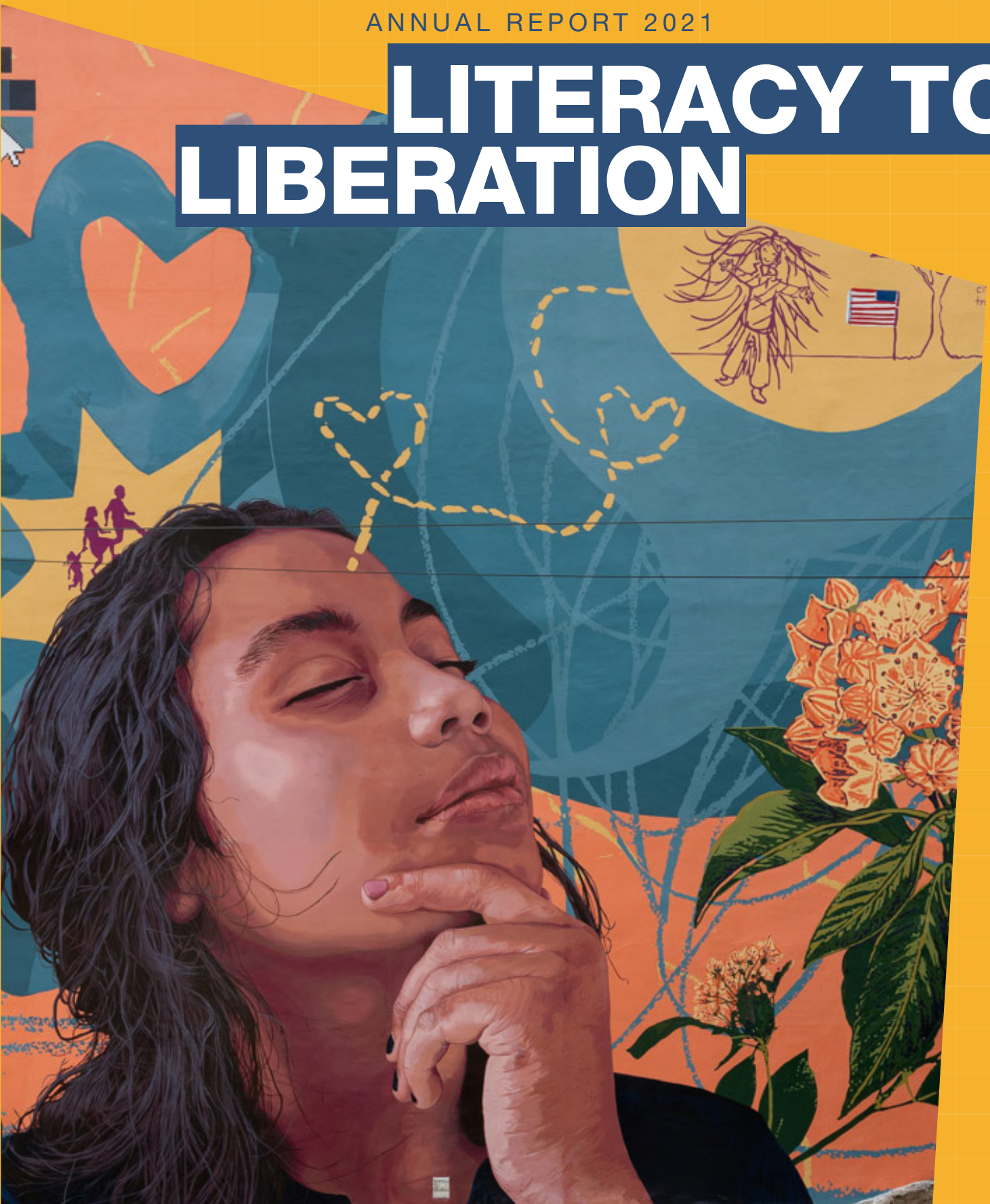


ANNUAL REPORT 2021

LITERACY TO LIBERATION



Our Mission

Children's Literacy Initiative seeks to dismantle structural racism by providing Black and Latinx children with the anti-racist early literacy instruction, support, and advocacy needed to create equity in education.

We are working towards creating a more equitable education system, one that promotes early literacy, cultural competency, and equitable outcomes for all students, particularly Black and Latinx students who have long been disproportionately isolated from the resources to obtain the education they deserve. CLI believes that literacy is a vital pathway to create lasting social change and foster a just and equitable society.

If we don't give everyone
the ability to simply
read and write, we
aren't giving everyone a
chance to succeed.

—Barbara Bush





When it comes to developing the high standards we need, it's time to stop working against our teachers and start working with them. Invest in early childhood education. Invest in our teachers and our children will succeed.

—Barack Obama

Literacy to Liberation

With children returning to schools for the first time in over a year, the work at Children's Literacy Initiative has never been more important. We know the impact of COVID is hardest felt in communities served by CLI. This means children and teachers are showing up, needing to draw on their strength, resilience and determination to teach and learn. CLI is also showing up, providing the support teachers need to help children feel safe, seen and ready to learn.

Why have communities served by CLI been disproportionately impacted by the COVID virus? A similar question could be asked about education: why is it more difficult for families to find a high-quality education for their children in communities served by CLI? Our conclusion is that the root cause of these inequalities is a different kind of virus: the systemic virus of racism. For too long, we have accepted a system of education that produces predictable and inequitable outcomes for children based on race.

This past year it became more evident than ever that we needed to sharpen our focus on the impact of racism to create the change we seek to make in education. We developed a new 5-year strategic plan and revised our mission statement to reflect this sharpened focus on structural racism and its impact on early literacy education for children. We are now explicitly centering the needs of Black and Latinx children as a way to develop and deliver more impactful solutions for all children. We are making critical changes to how we coach teachers focused on culturally-sustaining pedagogy that affirms and embraces the cultural and linguistic assets children bring with them to CLI-served classrooms.

We believe that literacy and education are critical to create a just and equitable society. Your support allows us to create lasting change for children across the country. As we move forward, we hope you will join us. By working alongside us, you're championing liberation for all.

Together, we can transform education.

Joel Zarrow
Chief Executive Officer

Sandra LaFleur
Board Chair

2020 – 2021

By the Numbers

Children's Literacy Initiative works with pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers to improve culturally sustaining literacy instruction so that children can become powerful readers, writers and thinkers. We accomplish this by providing (virtually or in-person):

- +One-on-one, job-embedded teacher coaching
- +Trainings in the best practices in culturally sustaining early literacy instruction
- +Leadership development to support sustainable change
- +High-quality classroom books and materials

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



3,059
Teachers Served



213
Schools & Districts Served



76,475
Students Served



4,458
Books Delivered



Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

About Our Anti-Racist Literacy Framework

For more than a century, educators throughout the United States have strived and struggled to meet the diverse needs of our Black and Brown children and their families. A complex system of biases and structural inequities are at play, deeply rooted in our country's history, culture, and institutions. This system of inequity — which routinely confers advantage and disadvantage based on linguistic background, gender, skin color, and other characteristics — must be clearly understood, directly challenged, disrupted, and fundamentally transformed.

Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy focuses on supporting educators in creating student-centered learning environments that value, appreciate, and affirm the many gifts and talents that students bring to the classroom, foster positive academic outcomes for students, develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference, elevate historically marginalized voices, support students in moving from dependent to independent learners, and empower students within their communities and the broader world.

For so many students, including our Black and Latinx students, obtaining an education has meant washing away aspects of their culture and identity to experience success. This is why Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy is so important. As part of our strategic plan, we set out to develop our Anti-racist Early Literacy Framework through the lens of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy and infuse this throughout all CLI services and resources.

What does Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Look like in the Classroom?

Our work with Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy begins with understanding that our students' identities, communities, and differences are an asset to schools and classrooms. Much of our work lies in supporting educators in leveraging these assets by ensuring that schools and classrooms create a welcoming and affirming environment for all students, that curriculum materials, resources, and assessments are inclusive, and that the classroom affirms and values diverse identities and backgrounds.

By focusing on teacher training and providing resources that affirm the lives of the Black and Brown communities we serve, CLI is helping create classroom environments of empathy, anti-racism, and criticality that center Black and Brown communities. When we center Black and Latinx children and look at instruction through a culturally sustaining lens, we see the following pursuits emerge:

Affirming Identities

Children have a secure sense of belonging. There is collective responsibility to affirm and nurture a strong sense of self and learn about each others' local and global culture and communities. Social emotional learning is incorporated into all instruction. Materials represent and affirm the multiple and emerging identities of children and offer accurate and positive windows into the lives of others. We resist "othering" and sending messages of *better* or *right*. When we affirm the identities of children, they know themselves deeply alongside the histories and truths of other diverse people.

Linguistic Liberty

We recognize that instruction in and access to dominant language is a critical enabler of a child's success and propels their full participation into society. However, this recognition is rooted in a firm belief that all language is beautiful, valid, and useful, especially the language practices of Black and Latinx communities.

Racial and Cultural Joy

We embrace and amplify Black and Latinx joy in our schools by centering student voices, and creating space for them to control their narrative, share their stories, celebrate who they are, and deepen their respect for one another.

Social Justice and Criticality

Children possess the ability to read, write, think, and speak in ways to fully and equally engage in a society that is mutually shaped to meet the biases of all to create a more equitable and diverse community. This world would create

What is Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy?

- + Fosters critical thinking and empowers students to be change agents
- + Supports students to shift from dependent to independent learners
- + Student Centered Learning Environments
- + Value, Appreciate, and Affirm Children's Assets
- + Fosters Positive Academic Outcomes
- + Develops abilities to connect across lines of difference
- + Elevates historically marginalized voices

a space that is physically, psychologically, and academically safe. Furthermore, children have the capacity to think critically and ask questions in order to recognize what is fair and just, to validate the experience, and feelings of people of color, examine their bias and have the agency to challenge inequity both inside and outside the classroom.

Intellect and Knowledge

The pursuit of intellect and knowledge has existed in Black communities going back generations. No child is too young to develop a critical lens for their own education. Building intellect gives Black and Brown children knowledge that they can put into action to create change to form a just world.

This has been an important change in how CLI operates. While our work still focuses on coaching and developing teachers to honor and appreciate the identities of their students, have high academic expectations for students, and provide rigorous instruction that meets the needs of their learners, we're doing so with more attention than ever before. We believe that this new framework is a vital lens for helping us achieve our mission and, more importantly, critical in creating an equitable education system that allows all children the pathway to literacy and liberation.



Donor Spotlight

The Barra Foundation, Supporting Literacy to Liberation

Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI) would like to offer sincere gratitude to The Barra Foundation, who this year provided a \$300,000 Recovery and Response grant to support CLI's Literacy to Liberation campaign to transform learning outcomes for Black and Latinx children. This gift is helping CLI advance its mission in Philadelphia and beyond.

The Barra Foundation provides approximately \$4 million in annual grants to 501(c)(3) organizations that are focused on supporting innovation in and across the fields Arts & Culture, Education, Health, and Human Services. The Recovery and Response Efforts were started by Barra in 2020 to prioritize efforts by organizations *using the lens of the disproportionate impact of dual pandemics: COVID-19 and systemic racism on communities of color.*



**Literacy is the road to
human progress and the
means through which
every man, woman and
child can realize his or her
full potential."**

—Kofi Annan

A Special Tribute

Dr. John (Jack) T. McGovern

Board Chair 2011-2013 (1947-2021)

Everybody in the world of literacy and learning wanted Dr. Jack McGovern to be associated with their organizations. His reputation was one that preceded him. So when McGovern joined Children's Literacy Initiative as deputy director for program development in 2000, CLI founder Linda Katz knew just how momentous it was for the Philadelphia-based nonprofit. McGovern oversaw the programs that provided professional development for teachers in literacy instruction. And, at what was a critical time for the organization, his experience and credibility helped to elevate CLI's work, impact, and reputation.



Jack McGovern was a US Army veteran who knew he wanted to become a teacher. After leaving the Army, he connected with Veterans in Public Service (VIPS), a federal program, along with Temple University, that provided higher education opportunities for Vietnam veterans who grew up in the inner cities. Working mornings in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), McGovern attended university in the afternoons, eventually earning his Master's and thereafter his Doctoral degree.

In 1981, he was recognized for his excellence in teaching and awarded the prestigious Rose Lindenbaum Award for Teacher of the Year. With a career that spanned SDP, Quaker education, Cabrini College, Penn Literacy Network, and as adjunct at many area universities, McGovern dedicated his life to children because he truly believed that every child could succeed.

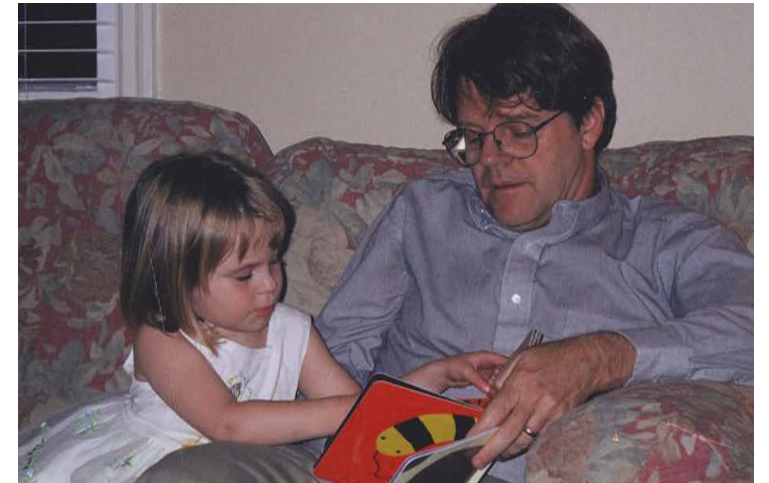
**"If you knew
Jack, you
loved him."**

– Linda Katz, Founder, CLI

From his own experience working in both fully- and under-resourced schools, McGovern strived most to help students who needed "a leg up". That, according to his daughter, Rhiannon Lindmar, is what brought McGovern to CLI. He believed in getting children access to the best books, and advocated for having beautiful libraries in every under-resourced school. McGovern provide professional development for teachers so that they too could deliver "extra good teaching."

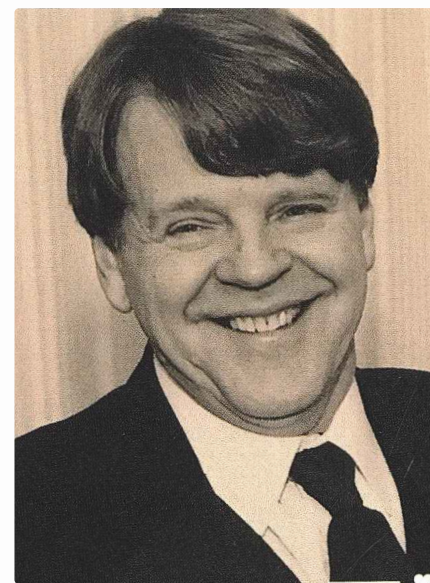
Lindmar, herself a teacher who was trained by CLI, speaks passionately of his mission to help children. She shares that this particularly manifested as he worked with teachers to be the best they could be for their students in turn to be their best.

McGovern was a reader. He was a lover of words, language, great literature, and good music. He was known for quoting books and poetry, and to always have his writer's notebook on hand. He was also known for his warm smile and an open curiosity about and genuine care for people. As described by Katz, "Jack cared enough to be tough when he needed to be. Jack had an inner core strength that he'd just do the right thing for children."



McGovern's greatest joy was reading aloud. He read to his university students, children, and grandchildren. He would bring the books to life, invoking and connecting to the characters, their voices and expressions. Lindmar especially recalls his read alouds of Patricia Palacco's *Thank you, Mr. Falker*, a book in which a teacher recognizes his student's abilities, takes the time to understand her challenges, and guides her to the magic and joy of reading. McGovern believed that children sometimes just need that special person, and for so many children and teachers, that is who Jack McGovern was.

Thank you, Dr. McGovern.



This I Believe

That as the "Elders of the Tribe" we must listen more closely to the voices of our young and old and those who are suffering, and become strong poets for the commonwealth

I believe that the best schools are places where in the words of C.S. Lewis, a student can be "surprised by joy"

I believe that our students must be both able and passionate learners and that the current "fetish" for assessment can extinguish interest and kill curiosity

I believe that we need poetry, every day!

Excerpt from *This I Believe: A Secular Epistle*

By Jack McGovern | Submitted by Pat Federman

Inspired by Edward R. Morrow, Nikki Giovanni and the Saints and Scholars who work in our schools

2020 – 2021

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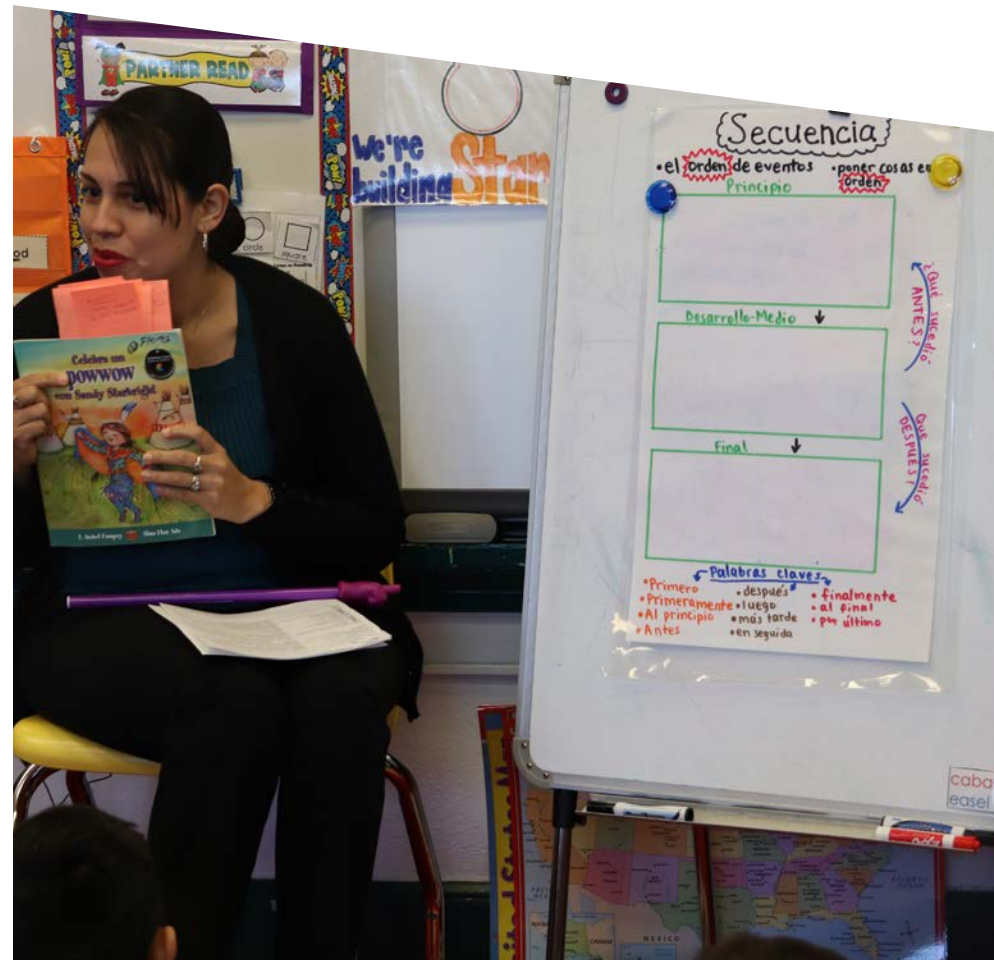
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2020 – 2021

Financial Summary

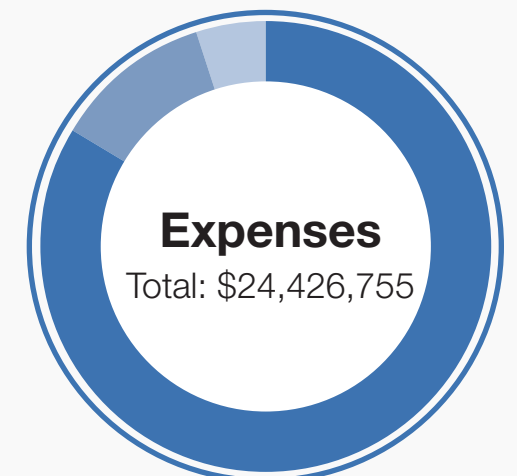
Financial recovery is underway at CLI as COVID-19 conditions forced budget-constrained districts to reduce or defer their contracts with us, impacting our portfolio of work and budget.

With only 16% of expenditures going to administration and fundraising costs, in 2020-21, 84% of all expenses were dedicated solely to CLI programming.

Children's Literacy Initiative's sound fiscal practices and commitment to accountability and transparency have earned it a Gold Participant rating from GuideStar, the world's largest source of information on non-profit organizations.



School District Contracts	73%
Government	13%
Private Philanthropy	13%
Investment Income	<1%



Program	84%
Administrative	11%
Fundraising	5%

2020-2021 Donor List

Thank you to all of our partners – individual, foundation, corporate and government – for your commitment to transforming education for underserved students. You play a pivotal role in the continued growth of Children's Literacy Initiative, helping us help teachers become the most impactful educators possible.

We are honored to recognize the following individuals and institutions for their generosity. Their support helps create positive, lasting change for teachers and students in under-resourced schools across the country and advances equity in education.



More than \$1,000,000

U.S. Department of Education*
W.K. Kellogg Foundation*

\$500,000 - \$999,999

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THANK YOU

A special thanks to Advisory Board members, Host Committee members, and volunteers. They have supported CLI's mission by raising visibility and working tirelessly to promote our mission, allowing us to continue to serve students and teachers across the country. By helping us host events like Raise a Glass for Reading and promoting our mission in their communities, these volunteer leaders have helped us make a difference in the lives of thousands of teachers and students.

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