

IMPACT

A Year in Review and a Look Ahead



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

LITERACY
PARTNERS

LETTER FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends:

Good grief... what a year!!

The sheer unimaginable nature of 2020 has had a huge impact on Literacy Partners and the families we serve. But, despite the odds, we are actually thriving as an organization.

Our story is one of hard work and rapid transformation. At a moment when adult literacy for Black and immigrant parents is more essential than ever, we are rising to the occasion.

COVID-19 has revealed the unquestionable urgency of our mission to help parents of young children. The phrase “parents are their children’s first teachers,” has taken on new meaning, and we have shifted gears to support our students in helping their children during this era of remote learning. Frequently, we provide the only assistance — be it books, food, or WIFI — that these immigrant families receive.

The pandemic has also forced us all to reckon with a vital truth: in our society, each of us has a stake in everyone being able to read and understand essential health information. If we commute to work, eat in a restaurant, or just visit family and friends, we can no longer say that illiteracy or lack of English proficiency is somebody else’s issue. It directly affects us all.

As our efforts and attention slowly shift from COVID-19 relief to recovery, Literacy Partners is expanding our programs with the creation of the **Liz Smith Center for Adult and Family Literacy** that will enable us to serve more parents of young children, essential workers, and other people of color hit hardest by the pandemic.

Ever since the Emancipation Movement and the Freedom Schools, adult literacy has been central to Black liberation and broader social justice movements. With the **Liz Smith Center**, we are proud to carry forward this vital tradition.

I want to thank you for your support this year. I hope you feel proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish under the most extraordinary circumstances.

Sincerely,



Anthony Tassi



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LITERACY PARTNERS strengthens families through a two generation approach to education. We help low-income and immigrant parents develop the literacy and language skills they need to succeed in today's world. We support parents to promote their children's early reading, social emotional growth, and school readiness.

Our goal is to improve job prospects for those hit hardest by COVID-19, close the achievement gap among low-income children, and ultimately break the cycle of poverty.



“ I learned that as parents we can achieve what we set out to do together with our children. I like that we can express ourselves without being judged.”

—YOVANA

Photo Credit: Mark Gurevich

PARENTS

80% graduated to the next academic level

76% began reading more often with their children

CHILDREN

Children of our students showed 64% more growth on preschool assessments of language development compared to their peers

LIZ SMITH CENTER FOR ADULT & FAMILY LITERACY

For over 40 years, Liz Smith was a passionate champion for Literacy Partners. Full of Texas spirit, Liz was a great friend with a newsy knack for gossip in a legendary career. Liz committed herself to support literacy, helping tens of thousands learn to read. She transformed countless lives.



Liz had laser-sharp focus and compassion. Her huge impact helped build Literacy Partners to be what it is today. This year, three years after her passing, we are proud and grateful to announce the establishment of the **Liz Smith Center for Adult & Family Literacy**.

The Liz Smith Center will focus on African Americans, immigrant families, and other communities of color – all disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Center will have a five-year goal – ***to educate 3,000 new students in five years*** – nearly doubling current reach.

Programs educate two generations at once, boosting the reading skills and English proficiency of parents for good jobs, helping teenage parents finish their high school equivalency and transition into college, while promoting the early learning and school readiness of their children.

Initial financial support is committed for the new center honoring Liz's work. In her legacy, we are dedicated to social justice, racial equity, and to helping low-income families in the most practical way: helping them learn to read. We hope you will join us! ■

TWO GENERATION IMPACT: WHOLE FAMILY LEARNING

A two-generation approach is central to the program portfolio of the Liz Smith Center. The whole family model disrupts the stubborn achievement gap for low-income immigrant children and communities of color. English-language classes for parents fortify the parent-child connection, improving childhood learning and social-emotional development.

Notably: every year, 80% of our parent-students advance to the next academic level. The two-generation approach emphasizes education and relationships, benefiting not only the parent or child, but the entire family.

SCAASI-LADD BOOK FUND: TREASURED FRIENDS

Liz Smith knew she needed strong allies to help fulfill her ambitions for Literacy Partners. She rallied two of her favorite friends, Parker Ladd, long-time publishing executive, and his husband, Arnold Scaasi, celebrated fashion designer.

The tireless trio raised more than \$37 million. After Arnold's death in 2015, Parker established the **Scaasi-Ladd Book Fund**. It is a permanent fund, supporting the **Books of Their Own** home library project, which provides a selection of brand-new, age- and content-appropriate books. Having books at home and reading books with parents has proven to be a clear predictor of future school readiness and academic success. This year, Arnold and Parker's **Book Fund** will provide support to help launch the **Liz Smith Center**. Fitting accolades for beloved friends.

"The greatest of all mistakes is to do nothing because you can only do a little. Do what you can."

— LIZ SMITH

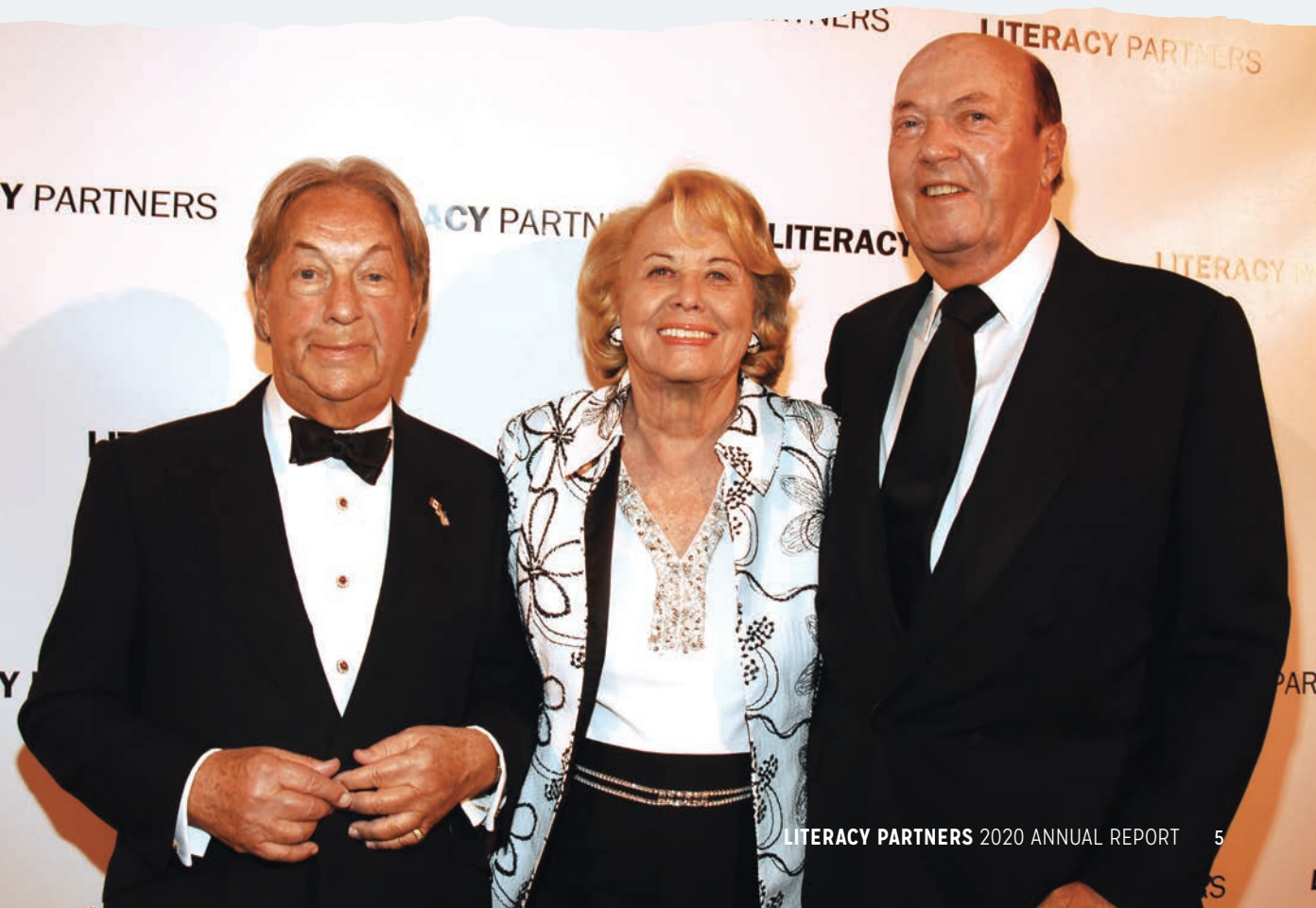




Photo Credit: Holger Thoss

NEKEYA'S LEAP: BRAND-NEW COLLEGE GRADUATE

Nekeya grew up in the Highbridge neighborhood of the Bronx, just two miles, but a world away, from where she lives now with her young sons, Xavier and Sincere. Once a child in foster care, she joined our Leadership, Education, and Parenting (LEAP) program last year. She recently graduated from Bronx Community College with a computer programming degree.

At age four, after two years in her second foster home, she was adopted, and they became her forever family. On a Zoom call with her Literacy Partners classmates, she remembered, *“I had a family find me and take me in, and I want my children to always feel that love and support.”*

School was a big part of Nekeya's life. In elementary and middle school, she thrived. Every subject was her favorite. Her good grades almost seemed too easy! It was a high point.

But high school was different. She stumbled, feeling out of place. It was a darker time, as she faced depression and anxiety. She tried to regain her footing, but bleak periods persisted. She left high school, pregnant with her first child.

Two years later her second son was born. Now, despite rough days, her supportive family was a haven. She has a strong bond with her sons. She is optimistic, *“Looking back, I wouldn't change anything, I feel like I got lucky.”*

Managing her anxieties, Nekeya discovered a sense of determination. Her toddler sons inspired her to get back on track. *“I needed to do something... I just felt like I wasn't*

doing enough with my life – so I started looking up where I could [go back to school].”

We met Nekeya when she was finishing her high school equivalency and planning to enroll in Bronx Community College. *“Yeah, I was kind of college ready,”* she realized at the time.

She joined our college transition program to give her an academic boost and support with her parenting. When her in-person college classes were canceled due to COVID-19, the physical disconnect was hard. But, Literacy Partners’ weekly seminars with the other 10 young mothers became an invaluable source of connections for her beyond the formal lessons.

Despite the pandemic, or what Nekeya calls, “all this stuff,” they succeeded and thrived together. *“I went back to school – and now I’m a college graduate, and it feels great.”* In June, her class held a joyful graduation... on Zoom, of course.

Nekeya is LEAP’s first college transition student to complete her college degree. A remarkable milestone achieved by perseverance and parental love.

The Literacy Partners college transition program is generously underwritten this year by a grant from Marshall Wace. ■



“It’s like I want to do so many things... I just don’t know what order I’m doing them in yet. But I have big plans after getting this associate degree.”

—NEKEYA

Student Assessment of the LEAP Program

100% strongly agree that LEAP helped them as mothers

100% strongly recommend LEAP to other students who are parents

89% agree or strongly agree that LEAP helped them as college students

ELIZABETH'S JOURNEY: A QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING



Photo Credit: Holger Thoss

Elizabeth's journey to America started on a farm in Mexico. A small town, a big family. Seven siblings and time to play together after dinner, as long as they finished helping their parents with all the work of the day. She remembers, "There was no time to get bored."

She went to elementary and middle school in her hometown but traveled to another town for high school. Of her school days, she says, "I was not the best student and not the worst, but I was okay." Michael Kengmana, her Literacy Partners "English for Parents" teacher, doesn't buy it. "She's a great student," he says, "and I love all my students, but Elizabeth is special, she's smart and works very hard."

Elizabeth proved to be more than "okay". She worked hard to create an opportunity to come to this country and settled in Brooklyn last year with her four-year-old son, Santiago. Bright and bouncy, Santiago is known among the neighbors as the boy who giggles, something his Head Start teacher noted on their first day of class this fall.

Elizabeth was happy to be with her son and grateful to find a job. But, she yearned for a better future and knew that not being able to read, write, and speak English fluently would hold her family back. When she heard about Literacy Partners' English for Parents classes from a friend, she signed right up and began in-person classes in January.

Then COVID-19 changed everything. Now, both mother and son take classes online. Not having childcare and dealing with unreliable internet coverage while everyone tried to figure out remote learning was – and still is – a big challenge. Continuing to work at a restaurant during the pandemic brought its own set of worries.

English classes continued remotely through the summer and fall with a focus on child health and learning about primary and preventive care. Elizabeth improved her English by leaps and bounds and thrived in her community of supportive classmates, all parents who know what she is going through.



Elizabeth now spends several hours each day helping Santiago, applying what she learned about child development and early learning in her Literacy Partners classes. Through it all, Santiago's giggles have helped her keep perspective.

Quite a journey. Recently, Elizabeth sent a text to her teacher. It was a picture of the first book — not a children's book — she'd completed in English. The book, *A Long Walk to Water*, is about war and strife for two Sudanese children. Describing the book, she says, "It's about persistence and how to survive — just don't give up." And Elizabeth is definitely not giving up! What's next on her reading list? It's *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

The English for Parents program is underwritten by The O'Neill Foundation and supported by The New York Times and many individual contributors like you. ■

Parents who started off “not prepared” were “more prepared” after the three-week Well Visit module.

- ✓ **100%** feel more prepared to ask about child's physical health
- ✓ **100%** feel more prepared to ask about child's mental health
- ✓ **80%** feel more prepared to fill out a health intake form

LA FUERZA DE FAMILIAS LATINAS: PARENT EDUCATION IN SPANISH

Literacy Partners has long recognized the power of telling a good story to help people learn and to motivate them to take action. Thanks to our co-founder Liz Smith, media savvy is part of the DNA of our organization. Over the years, we've created educational media as well as TV and radio campaigns to reach our potential students.

In 2018, we produced a seven-episode television series to help new immigrants improve their English skills and learn more about life in New York. The series aired on local television in New York and won an Emmy Award.

In 2019, we took our work to the next level with a partnership with Univision, the leading media company serving the Hispanic community. Together, we created a short-run telenovela called *La Fuerza de Creer* ("The Power of Believing").

The 5-episode series told the story of a beloved community center threatened by real estate development and the families who rely on it for childcare who must rally to save it. Throughout the story, we see in each family how parents and caregivers promote their children's early learning and healthy development.



The series earned 1.2 million average daily viewers across the country. Motivated by this success, we created ***La Fuerza de Familias Latinas*** (“The Power of Latinx Families”), a program of educational workshops for Spanish-speaking parents, caregivers, and childcare workers. Trained facilitators use content from the TV series to prompt conversation on key child development topics and explore strategies to promote early learning, social emotional growth, and school readiness.

Our pilot program was evaluated by Dr. Susan Neuman of New York University, who called it “uniquely effective” among education programs for Latinx parents. She noted the participants learned important ways to promote their children’s language development and early reading skills at home. The weekly workshops resulted in parents talking, reading, singing, and playing with their children more often.

With the arrival of COVID-19, we quickly moved the programs to Zoom and WhatsApp. We now provide digital books and online read-alouds for caregivers and help parents with their children’s remote learning. We’ve also created more digital content to reach parents at home, including a series of short videos called ***Momentos de Conexión*** (“Moments of Connection”) which stress the importance of a strong parent-child bond in helping children learn.

In its first year, ***La Fuerza de Familias Latinas*** reached 265 parents with 373 children in New York, Miami, and Philadelphia. The program is an effective and popular resource for Spanish-speaking parents and caregivers, who often lack quality educational content in their native language.

We are grateful to the William Penn Foundation, the Staten Island Foundation, and the Cleveland Dodge Foundation for helping to make this program possible. ■

“I was the only man in the workshop and I realized that, as a father figure, I also have a lot to learn on how to raise my child. I learned a lot from the mothers in the group, especially on how to treat my child better.”

—CHRISTIAN

La Fuerza de Familias Latinas **Participant Survey Results**

97% implemented 2 or more learning strategies with child at home

81% said their knowledge of child development improved

70% reported increased confidence in using online education resources with their children

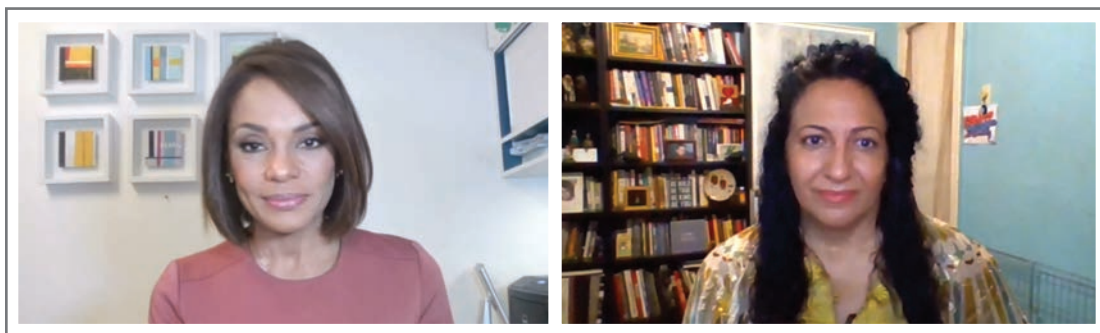
WORDS SHAPE

A LITERARY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE SERIES

After 34 years of success, the Literacy Partners **Evening of Readings** was canceled in April 2020 due to the pandemic. In its place, we created an online series of literary and social justice events, ***Words Shape Our World***, where our community could gather to engage on the important social trends impacting our students and the broader community.



The Lizzie Award: Perri Peltz with Jon Meacham and Cynthia McFadden



My Turn to Speak: A Book Talk with Ilia Calderón and Neyda Martínez

Lizzie Awards Honoring Perri Peltz

featuring Jon Meacham

► September 22

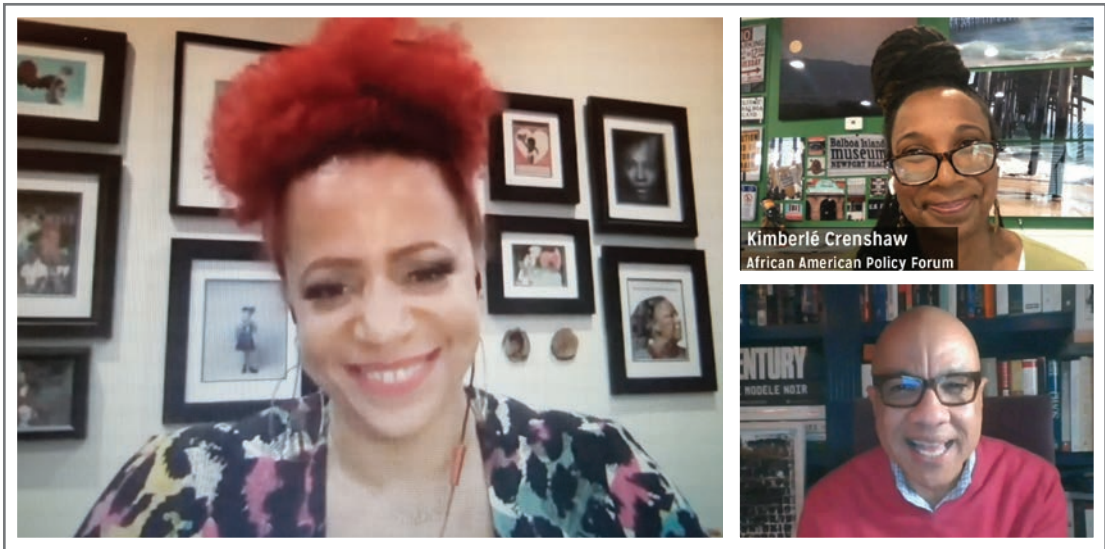
My Time to Speak A Reading by Ilia Calderón

with Neyda Martínez

► October 1

OUR WORLD

The four events revealed the stubborn and brutal legacy of slavery and racism in our country as well as the central role of adult literacy in the longstanding liberation struggle of Black Americans. We celebrated the accomplishments of extraordinary individuals who broke boundaries and informed the national discourse on race and history. We concluded with an all-star cast of today's most important authors each reading a chapter of Toni Morrison's iconic novel, *Song of Solomon*, in a marathon reading over Thanksgiving weekend. ■



The Champion of Literacy Award: Nikole Hannah-Jones with Kimberlé Crenshaw and Darren Walker



A Marathon Reading of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* with Jacqueline Woodson, Lorrie Moore and Brit Bennett

Champions of Literacy The New York Times Magazine's - 1619 Project

A Dialogue: Nikole Hannah-Jones & Kimberlé Crenshaw
Moderated by Darren Walker

► October 8

A Tribute to Toni Morrison

Song of Solomon
Marathon Reading

► November 27, 28 & 29

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“I have learned that now, especially now, it’s better to stay connected than to be alone. This group has helped me to meet other parents with similar interests in the education of our children.” – **YADIRA**

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“I realized that many of the activities I do with my child are beneficial for his development. It was good reassurance.”

—TIANA

“I learned that as parents we can achieve what we set out to do together with our children. I like that we can express ourselves without being judged.”

—YOVANA

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Katrina Terry	Jan Weinstock	

**Thanks to our 566 donors who have generously
supported Literacy Partners this past year!**

A TRUSTED ADVISOR: CAROLYN REIDY

Literacy Partners celebrates the life of one of the most extraordinary leaders in the world of publishing, our good friend and former Board member Carolyn Reidy.

As the President and CEO of Simon & Schuster, Carolyn published some of the most important authors of our time and had a huge impact on the business of reading. She was a brilliant editor, a fearless and savvy leader, and a captain of industry. Her commitment to her authors, employees, and friends was legendary.

Carolyn's advice and counsel to Literacy Partners over the years was invaluable. We owe a big part of our success in addressing educational inequities to Carolyn Reidy and her generous and expansive vision.

Literacy Partners is grateful for Carolyn's friendship and commitment to our mission. We proudly continue her legacy in teaching adults to read. ■



A RENAISSANCE MAN: SONNY MEHTA

On December 30, 2019, Sonny Mehta passed away and we knew the world of literature would never be the same.

The legendary editor-in-chief at Alfred A. Knopf and chairman of the Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group was renowned for his gift in cultivating talent and nurturing writers to produce their great written works. He published six Nobel prize winning authors during his career.

Sonny was a cosmopolitan thinker and a kind and generous leader. He was a longtime supporter of Literacy Partners and delighted in the notion that he could introduce adults not only to a great work of literature, but to reading itself.

Surrounded by the beauty and occasional solace of books, Sonny left the world a better place for so many new readers through his philanthropy. ■



LYNN CLARK: WORDS OF WELCOME

We are proud to welcome Lynn Clark, Ph.D. as our new Chief Program Officer.

An educator committed to literacy education for both parents and children, Lynn connected early to the power of books.

"I was blessed by having a mother who was a librarian," she says. "When you grow up in a library, you know that everything is connected. Every book is its own world, but they are all part of the same universe." That shaped her view of education: "Learning happens everywhere, not just in a classroom or the text in front of you."

Lynn was also fortunate to have a mother from India and a father from the United States. *"From the earliest age, I got a view of the world that was expansive and inclusive. You need to understand people's journeys to help them take the next step."*

Previously, Lynn served as a textbook writer, university professor, program evaluator, and most recently, as the executive director of a family services coalition where she created education programs for parents and children. Along the way, she continued to sing professionally in operas and oratorios across America. We welcome Lynn to our universe. Clearly she knows where learning happens. ■



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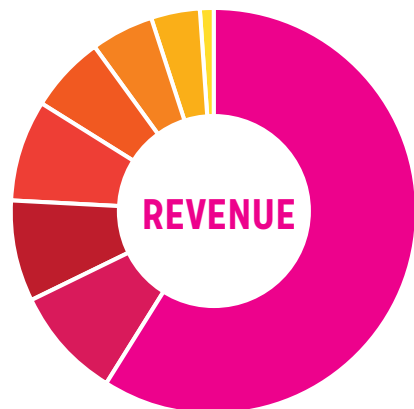
Academy of Medical and Public Health Services	Philadelphia Pre-K
Barbershop Books	P.S. 018 John G. Whittier
Broadway Family Plaza Praxis Housing Shelter	P.S. 031 William T. Davis
Bronx House	P.S. 057 Hubert H. Humphrey
Congreso, Philadelphia	P.S. 184 Shuang Wen School
Early Learning Coalition, Miami	P.S. 21 Margaret P. Emery Elm Park
Educational Alliance	P.S. 861 Staten Island School of Civic Leadership
El Centro Del Inmigrante	Parent Teacher Association of P.S. 166 Henry Gradstein
Family Health Centers at NYU Langone	Queens Library Corona Branch
Flatbush YMCA	Richmond Pre-K Center
Florida Children's Council	SCO Family of Services
Flushing YMCA New Americans Welcome Center	St. Nicks Alliance
Future Now at Bronx Community College	The Child Center of New York
Grand Street Settlement Bushwick Family and Child Center	The Children's Movement of Florida
Hillside Arts and Letters Academy	The Children's Trust
Hudson Guild Child Center	The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services
Jacob Riis Neighborhood Settlement	The Lighthouse Family Head Start
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center	Therese Cervini Head Start
Kingsley Head Start Center	Too Small to Fail
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Norris Square Community Alliance	MetroPlus Health
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation	Strong Children's Wellness
	Theresa Lang Children's Center
	Public Health Solutions

LITERACY PARTNERS thanks our 80 interns and volunteers for their invaluable support and commitment to our students and the organization's mission. **THANK YOU!**

FINANCIALS: FY2020 (unaudited)*

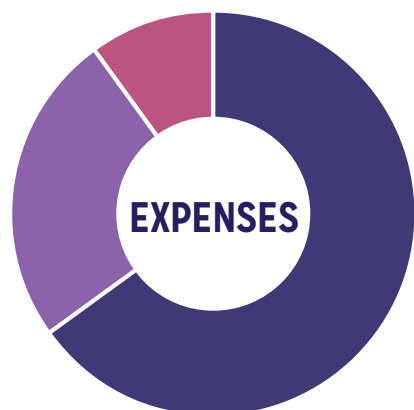
● Bequests	\$4,200,000
● Investment Appropriation	\$659,200
● Foundations & Corporations	\$567,041
● Special Events	\$553,924
● In-kind Contributions	\$459,325
● Individuals	\$325,066
● Government	\$304,223
● Other Revenue	\$48,800

TOTAL REVENUE **\$7,117,579**



● Programs	\$1,758,075 (65%)
● Fundraising	\$666,795 (25%)
● Administration & Management	\$267,819 (10%)

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$2,692,689**



*Unaudited (as of September 30, 2020)

THANK YOU! Literacy Partners' expansion this past year is a reflection of the generous support and commitment of donors like you. The success stories of Nekeya and Elizabeth are representative of the **1,800** students and their children that we serve. Their success is made possible thanks to your investment in adult literacy education. Thank you for believing in our student's potential and in our mission. We are grateful for your continued generosity.

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“ Thanks so much to
Literacy Partners for everything.
You guys have helped me out
more than you would know
— so thank you! ”

— NEKEYA

LITERACY PARTNERS

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