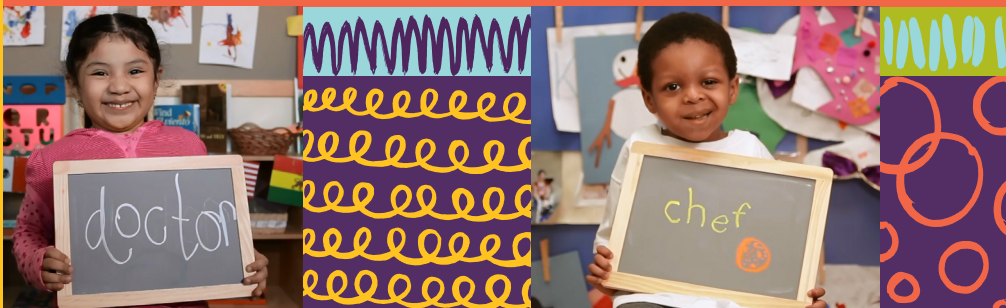


# Way to Grow™



2013 Annual Report

## Vision

Together, we will ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life.

## Mission

Working closely with parents and communities, we ensure that children within the most isolated families are born healthy, stay healthy and are prepared for school.



“All great achievements  
require time.”

— Maya Angelou

## Hello,

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we honor the many families who have given us the opportunity to help prepare their children for school and beyond. Way to Grow has served 66,000 people and experienced many achievements as the result of the continued commitment of parents, strong community partners, foundations, public and individual supporters. Since the beginning, the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, United Way, General Mills and Minneapolis Public Schools have believed that our modest organization could have an extraordinary impact on the future of individual children and families, our community, our workforce and our economy.

In 2013, we served 2,300 parents and children, and completed more than 12,000 home visits. Along the way, we helped get 88% of Way to Grow pre-kindergarten children ready for school and 71% of our elementary students reading at or above grade level.

Despite the increase in state and local resources, Minneapolis is still experiencing the highest education gap in the country. As a community, we must not give up on the notion that all children and families should have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed. Rather, we must be committed to ensuring that all children are prepared for a lifetime of academic and career success.

As our parents continue to work hard at educating their children and stabilizing their home life, they need our help to navigate the system for additional support. It takes a village to serve a community, and we will be diligent in doing our part.

Way to Grow graciously thanks the public, private and non-profit organizations, as well as old and new supporters, who continue to strive toward excellence in their work on behalf of the children and families we serve.

God Bless,

Carolyn Smallwood  
Executive Director, Way to Grow

## Way to Grow's Impact

92%

of Way to Grow newborns were born at or above a healthy birth weight

88%

of Way to Grow children were prepared for kindergarten

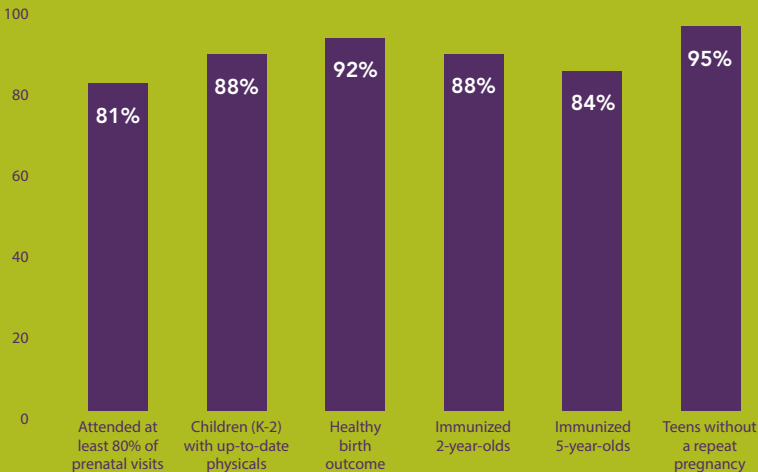
96%

of Way to Grow K-3 elementary program parents attended two or more parent-teacher conferences

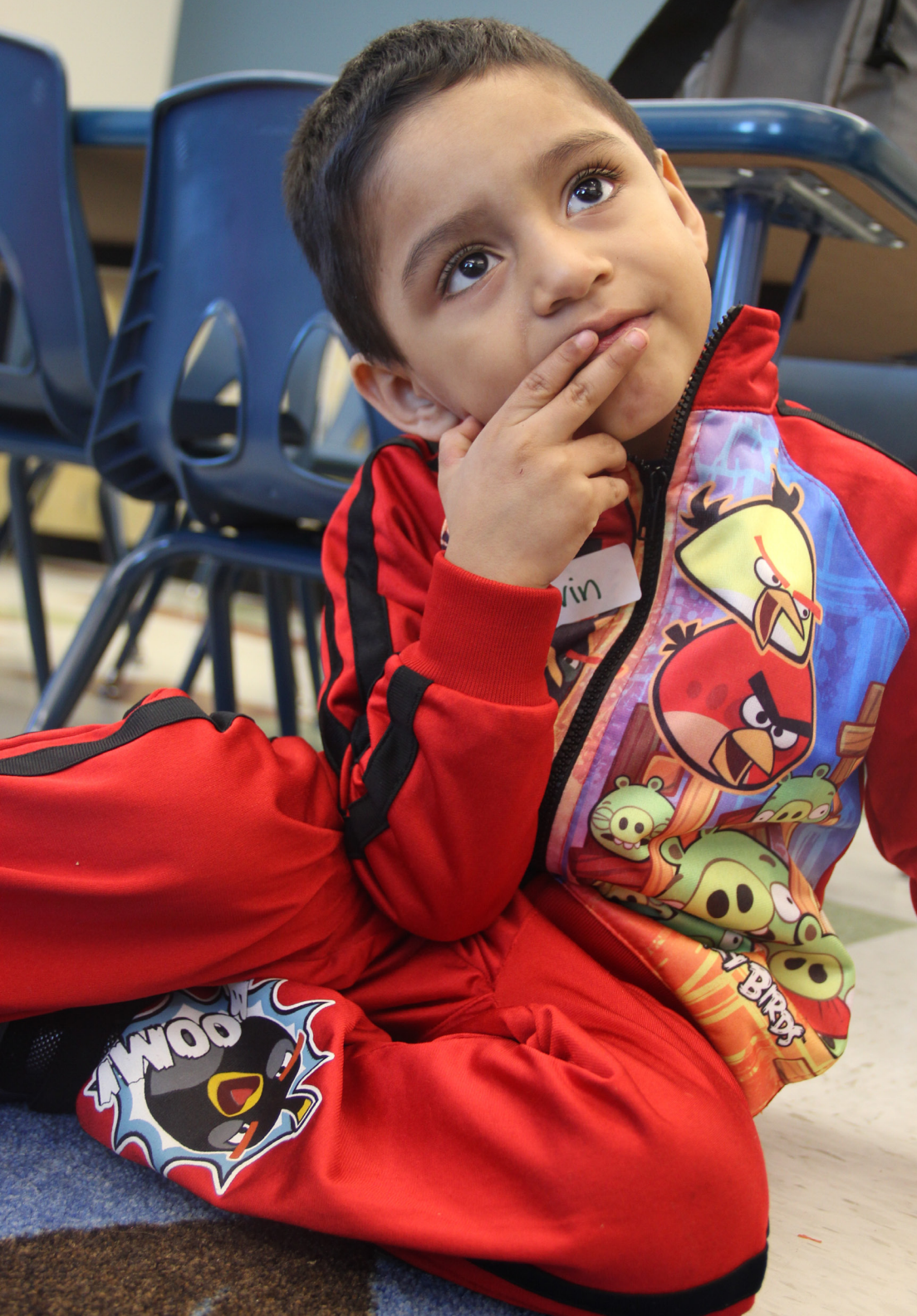
95%

of Way to Grow teen mothers did not have a repeat pregnancy

## Results of Our Health and Wellness Services









## Family Support

### In 2013

- 12,442 home visits were made by Way to Grow Family Educators and Resource Advocates
- 2,346 parents and children received high quality home visits focused on early education
- 2,342 referrals were made to agencies to access food, clothing, affordable housing, and other support services

### We make strong connections for better care.

Through our unique home visiting programming, Way to Grow helps families address their individual needs so that parents can create an atmosphere of learning for their children. We take a holistic approach to supporting families which includes collaboration with other agencies whose services complement our mission of ensuring that children within the most isolated families are born healthy, stay healthy and are prepared for school. These strategic partnerships, in combination with our services, provide critical assistance to help families overcome whatever obstacles they face.

During Way to Grow home visits, our Family Educators assess each family's situation including difficulties in accessing resources or services. When a family needs help with housing, food, clothing, medical or employment, Resource Advocates connect the families to one of our 50+ partners. These connections help parents build a stable home — enabling children to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for kindergarten and beyond.

# Health & Wellness Education

## In 2013

- 194 pregnant mothers received individualized prenatal home visits
- 92% of pregnant mothers served had a healthy birth outcome
- 88% of children up to date on physicals / 85% up to date on dental visits
- 79% of parents up to date on physicals / 59% up to date on dental visits

## Building the foundation for a healthy home.

Research proves that when children are born healthy, they have fewer developmental delays through their formative years. When we meet the health needs of parents and children, we increase the chances of a child's long-term health, academic, social and economic success. Way to Grow provides culturally-sensitive, research-based health education for parents, expectant mothers and their families in tandem with early literacy and elementary education. Our health programming teaches parents about prenatal, infant and toddler care; physical, mental and dental health; nutrition; exercise; safety; and child development with the goal that all children are healthy and prepared to learn while encouraging families to adopt a lifelong healthy lifestyle.

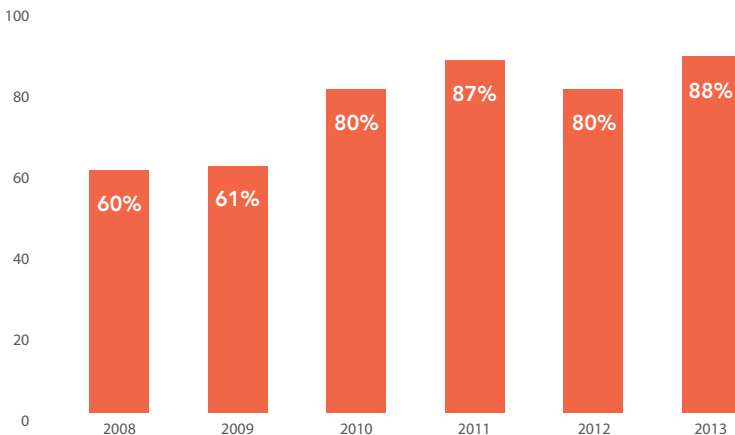
When necessary, our Resource Advocates refer families to our appropriate health and dental care partners. Two of our most prominent partnerships are with the Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency (MVNA) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC).



## Great by Eight Early Learning

### In 2013

- 1,139 children served in the early learning program, birth to pre-kindergarten
- 53 children ages 3 to 5 received quality, center-based early learning programming through Way to Grow Preschool Pals
- 88% of children met school readiness benchmarks and were prepared to succeed in kindergarten
- 94% of children birth to 4 years demonstrated age-appropriate development



For each of the past four years, Way to Grow children have met or exceeded the 80% benchmark for school readiness.

## **Success starts well before the first school bell.**

New research supports the importance of early education for all children; especially children living in poverty, with early interventions less likely to fade as children age. We see this research come to life each and every day as we work to ensure all children are physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively ready to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Way to Grow's early childhood programming (ages 0-5) is a research-based integrated model offered through home visitations to over 2,000 participants (children and their families) each year, educating families on best practices, literacy development, math, health and nutrition, family safety, mental health and child development. The research-based SEEDS of Early Literacy and its Big Five Essential Early Literacy Skills (Vocabulary and Meaning; Alphabetic Knowledge; Book and Print Concepts; Phonological Memory and Awareness; and Oral Language, Conversation and Comprehension) curriculum is used as a framework for Family Educators and parents for children ages birth to 5. Parents read and play with their children utilizing intentional literacy and numeracy building practices including the use of books, toys and props to promote reading and math skills.

Beyond the home, Way to Grow offered a center-based preschool during the 2012-2013 school year. Preschool Pals, a four-day-a-week program, is NAEYC accredited and has been awarded a 4-star rating by MN Parent Aware.



# Tonia

Tonia was pregnant with her second child when she was struck with the news that her two-year-old would need extra help if she was to talk before kindergarten. Tonia's doctor referred Tonia to Way to Grow.

The Way to Grow Family Educator began to visit Tonia working to overcome the numerous barriers she was facing as a single mother – connecting her to housing, clothing, food shelves and preschool resources. Once her family's basic needs were met, Tonia shared one of her greatest goals: to be the first person in her family to graduate from college. At the time, it seemed impossible. However, anyone who meets Tonia can attest to her strong will, sharp wit and determination. Minneapolis Community and Technical College proved a perfect match. Tonia thrived and soon her once lofty goals became a reality. Tonia moved on to find a place to call her own and in rewriting her own story, created a brighter future for her children.

Fifteen years later, Tonia returned to Way to Grow to guide and support families like her own. "My story is no different from the families we help today. I decided to take the help and support, and turn it into something beneficial for my family. I wanted to change my circumstance, but didn't know how until a Way to Grow Family Educator showed me."



# Great by Eight K-3 Elementary Education

## In 2013

- 192 Minneapolis kindergarteners through 2nd graders participated in the Elementary Education program

## With the support of Minneapolis Public Schools:

- 73% of K-2 students met or exceeded grade level benchmarks
- 71% of K-2 students read at or above grade level
- 96% of parents attended both Fall and Spring parent-teacher conferences
- 88% of students completed an annual physical

Family Educators continue home visits to parents and their elementary children to model and demonstrate what students are expected to learn at each grade level in literacy/reading, math, science, and social studies. Families are connected to tutoring services as needed as parents learn how to help their children with homework and foster relationships with their school and teacher through conferences, volunteer opportunities and school events.

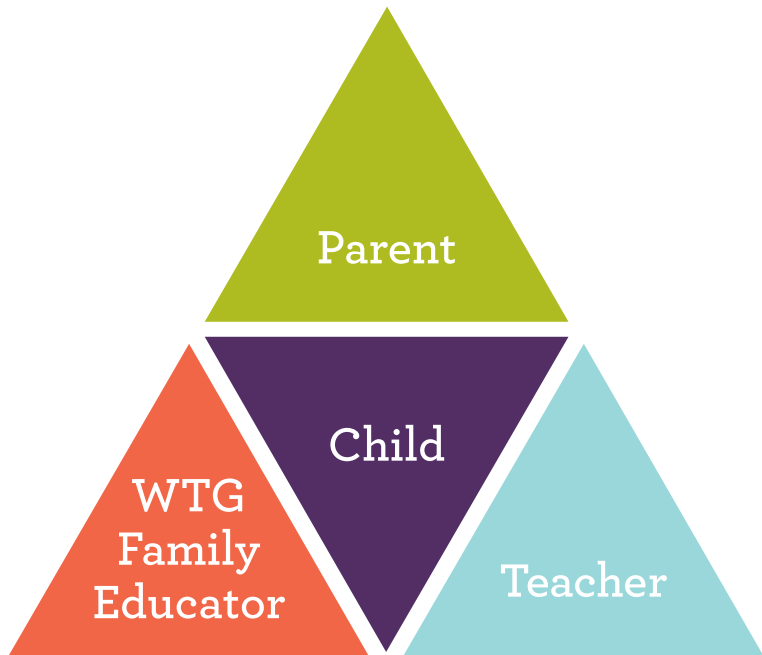
The MONDO Let's Talk About It! Curriculum is used to help families increase vocabulary acquisition and usage in both English and their home language. This curriculum has documented success in improving reading achievement, and integrates practical math and science skills. Board games are also used as a tool to teach and model for families how to use games to foster cognitive skills, reasoning and problem-solving, along with social and emotional skill development.



## Parents, teachers and Way to Grow: A team approach for a successful student.

Our home visiting program is what makes Way to Grow unique and successful.

Through relationships with parents, schools and community partners, Way to Grow is working to eliminate the barriers that prevent success in school and life. Through home visits, Family Educators build relationships with families, identify strengths and risks, and help parents develop and achieve personal goals so their children can thrive. By teaching parents and children in their home environment, we can tailor services and educational materials to each family's unique needs. This process reduces the education gap and builds stronger communities for all of us.



# Way to Grow's Extended Programming

## Dream Tracks™ Teen Parenting Program

Teen parents face many obstacles and struggles. The Way to Grow Dream Tracks™ program helps educate and prepare parents ages 15 to 21 for a successful life by addressing parenting, motivational empowerment, academic engagement, career adaptability, and sexual health.

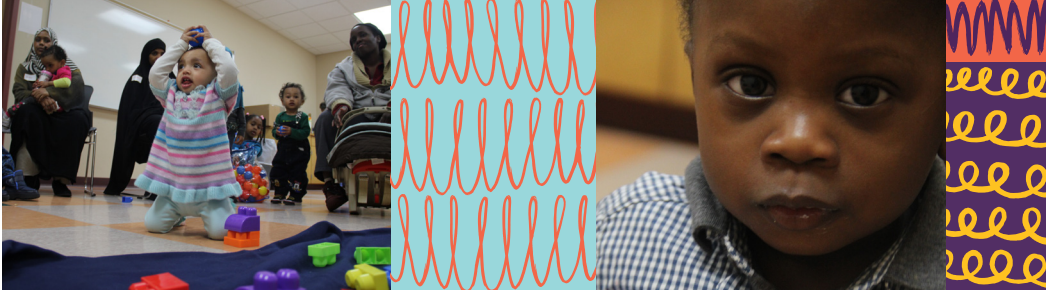
This program is specifically designed for parents who are attending or willing to enroll in high school / GED programs and are committed to their education and career goals. Throughout the course of the Dream Tracks™ program, participants are encouraged to constantly set, work toward, and achieve new goals for themselves and their families. This forward-looking approach helps young parents gain new skills and greater confidence as both parents and community members.

In 2013,

- 38 parenting teens (ages 15-21) were served
- 95% of Way to Grow teen mothers did not have a repeat pregnancy
- 71% of participants secured employment upon graduation from high school

## FATHER Project

Partnering with the Goodwill/Easter Seals program, Way to Grow helped 22 participants in the FATHER Project provide safe and stable home environments for their families. Our Family Educators teach fathers how to positively impact their child's learning and help guide the fathers on how to be role models for their children.



## New Parent Support Group

Way to Grow's New Parent Support Group began January 2013. During this monthly group, parents with infants and children up to eighteen months spend time together discussing common parenting questions and concerns, while participating in activities together. Parents receive relevant parenting information such as breastfeeding support, sleep issues, nutrition, healthy child development and safety. All activities are designed for parents to teach their babies during play, drawing on the philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum that children learn through play.

## Cooking Matters

Way to Grow offered three six-week Cooking Matters cooking and nutrition courses for both parents and children in partnership with University of Minnesota Extension. This course taught families how to use healthy recipes and plan meals on a tight budget. If parents needed translation services, Way to Grow Family Educators attended these sessions with their families. These courses include an extensive pre and post course evaluation. Parents report they have gained more knowledge on healthy cooking, how to introduce new foods to their children and how to shop for healthy foods on a budget.

## Financial Literacy Classes

Ten financial literacy classes – Level 1 (beginner) and Level 2 (advanced) were offered in partnership with Lutheran Social Services Financial Counseling. Topics included: spending and savings, getting out of debt, building credit and investing for the future. Participants created their own, personalized budget. Both classes were well received by the 143 participants, with 99% demonstrating an increased financial knowledge.

# Jyakima

Jyakima was referred to Way to Grow through the FATHER Project, a program designed to help fathers improve their ability to provide economic and emotional support for their children. Jyakima joined with the hopes of doing just that, setting a positive example for his son.

Jyakima is raising his vibrant, now 7-year-old son, Saint, on his own. With the support of Way to Grow, he has made great strides in creating a safe and stable environment for Saint to learn and grow. His Family Educator helped him secure reliable transportation through Ways to Work and acquire a computer through a partnership with Comcast. These tools empowered Jyakima, who has since graduated from the FATHER Project and is currently employed with a temp agency. Jyakima has experienced a newfound pride, being able to provide for his son who now attends Emerson Spanish Immersion School.

Jyakima believes his introduction to the FATHER Project and Way to Grow were true blessings. Grateful for those who believed in him and helped his family along the way, he gives back by sharing his contagious smile and volunteering as a student mentor at Little Earth Youth Development Center in Minneapolis.





## 2013 Revenue & Expenses

Way to Grow met the year's pending financial challenges head on. The organization was fortunate to secure a variety of new funding sources for our programs, forging new friendships and partnerships while growing programs to ensure critical support is given to our increasing number of families and children.

<b>Operating Revenue</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2012</b>
Contributions	\$174,911	\$77,882
Government	\$841,287	\$664,935
Foundations	\$855,019	\$1,035,214
United Way	\$250,561	\$287,296
Program Service	\$31,326	\$24,944
Annual Celebration	\$173,974	\$96,010
Interest Income	\$241	\$406
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,327,319</b>	<b>\$2,186,688</b>

### **Operating Expenses**

Program Services	\$1,777,134	\$1,570,770
Administrative Services	\$202,733	\$247,715
Fundraising Services	\$380,443	\$334,408
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$2,360,310</b>	<b>\$2,152,893</b>



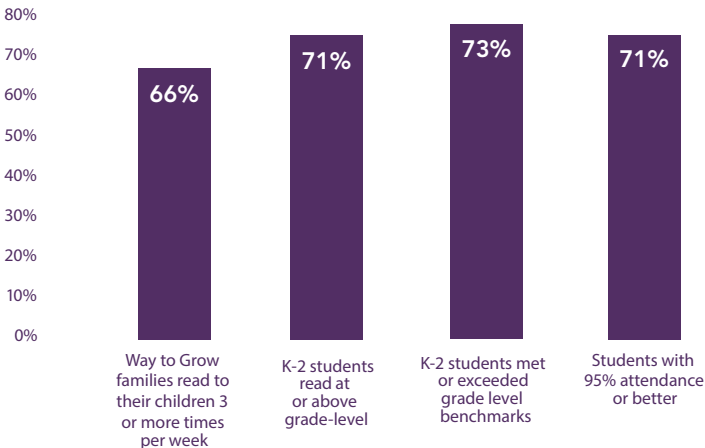


## Our Outlook for the Future

### An Update on the Great by Eight Initiative

Experts agree the early childhood development window extends beyond kindergarten to the first decade of a child's life, as research confirms that achievement in 3rd grade is remarkably predictive of academic, social and economic success. To this end, Way to Grow embarked on a five-year initiative, "Great by Eight", created to extend our early education services from birth through the third grade, age 8. In 2013, we experienced year four of this initiative, extending programming through the second grade. We are excited to celebrate the final year of the initiative in 2014, when we serve our very first cohort of third graders, culminating the five-year pilot.

In 2013, Way to Grow served over 194 children in 34 Minneapolis public schools and 6 public charters. As we extend our services to more children during these critical first eight years, the benefits continue to accumulate. Our vision is that together, we will empower our next generation of leaders and create vibrant, healthier communities for us all.



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AchieveMpls

African American Family Services

American Indian Family Center

Blaisdell YMCA

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota

BlueWater Association, Inc.

Bridging, Inc.

Broadway Family Medicine

Broadway School at Longfellow

Bundles of Love

Center for Families with the Greater  
Minneapolis Council of Churches

Centro Cultural Chicano

Children's Defense Fund (Bridge to Benefits)

Children's Dental Services

Children's Hospitals & Clinics

Children's Theater Company

City of Minneapolis Department of Health &  
Family Support

City of Minneapolis Office of Multicultural  
Services

Community Initiatives for Children

Community University Health Care Center

Early Childhood Family Education

Early Childhood Intervention Services of  
Hennepin County

East Side Neighborhood Services

Emerge Family Supportive Housing Program

Fairview Health Services & Clinics

Family Partnerships

The FATHER Project

First Book

Gale Woods Farm

Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches

Harvest Prep/Best Academy

Head Start, Parents In Community Action

Hennepin County Child and Teen Check Up

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# way to grow™

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