

way to grow™

2022 Annual Report



OUR MISSION

Working closely with parents and communities, we ensure that children are born healthy, stay healthy, and are prepared for school.

OUR VISION

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



Dear Friends,

It has been two tremendous years since the major pandemic strike of 2020! Despite all of the adversities, Way to Grow has managed to thrive and come out on the other side prepared to serve more families and children. The time was right for Way to Grow to spread its wings to reach more communities, develop more strategic partnerships, and promote stronger solutions for social, economic, and education gaps.

As reports of children falling behind filled the news in 2022, Way to Grow's impact provided a spectacular contrast. Minnesota faces one of the largest opportunity gaps in the nation, yet Way to Grow inspired change and our families continued to break through systemic barriers with their unwavering determination to succeed. Last year, an incredible 98% of our pre-k students started kindergarten ready to succeed in school and beyond!

For the past 18 years, Way to Grow families have inspired me, and this year was no different. Our team of highly trained Family Educators completed 11,368 home visits, reaching over 1,800 individuals. Our Family Educators increased in-person home visits, strengthened new and familiar connections with community partners, and deepened our impact in Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs—all with our eyes lifted to the future.

As we continue to adapt, thrive, and remain resilient, I would like to thank the dedicated Way to Grow staff and board of directors, along with the generosity of our donors, government agencies, corporations, and community partners. Thank you for making an incredible impact on the lives of Way to Grow families.

Together, we are a resilient community of individuals who are working towards a better future for our youngest generation.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Smallwood
Chief Executive Officer

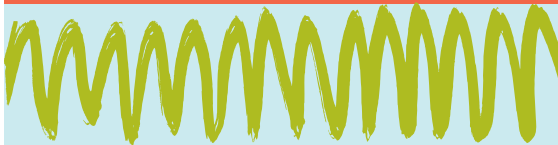
“

We are each
other's harvest:
we are each other's
business: we are
each other's
magnitude and
bond.

”

Gwendolyn Brooks
from Paul Robeson

Who We Are



“

Mr. Tony has been the most supportive as far as getting Destiny comfortable in her transition to kindergarten. He's always warm – it's comfortable, genuine support.

”

Sharla
Way to Grow Parent

About Way to Grow

Our Story

For over three decades, Way to Grow has been addressing Minnesota's gap in early education head-on and without hesitation. We envision a state where every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life, and we're working to build this future *today*.

Our goal is for every child in our community to feel valued and supported from the moment they are born. Way to Grow's Great by Eight programming supports children and caregivers from before birth through third grade, providing a year-round education curriculum and wraparound support for the entire family.

Through our innovative home visiting model and expansive programming, we are proud to work with more than 1,800 individuals in Minneapolis and the surrounding suburbs—our neighbors who work hard to provide for their children, are active in their community, and care deeply about their child's education.

Closing the opportunity gap is a community-wide effort, and Way to Grow is proud to be surrounded by a strong network of supporters, families, staff, and education advocates in our community.

In 2022, Way to Grow partnered with over 100 community agencies to provide critical basic needs and additional enrichment opportunities for our families. Our work was further supported by more than 450 individuals, foundations, and corporations who have chosen to invest in the future of our children and in turn, in the vitality of this community.

Way to Grow continues to reach families, build networks of services, and ensure that every child in our community is prepared to start school on track, but there is still work to be done. As we look ahead, we're embarking on an expansion journey to deepen our ties in Minneapolis and expand our reach even further into the suburbs. Will you join us?



Filling in the Gaps

Building a vibrant future for Minnesota's youngest generation.

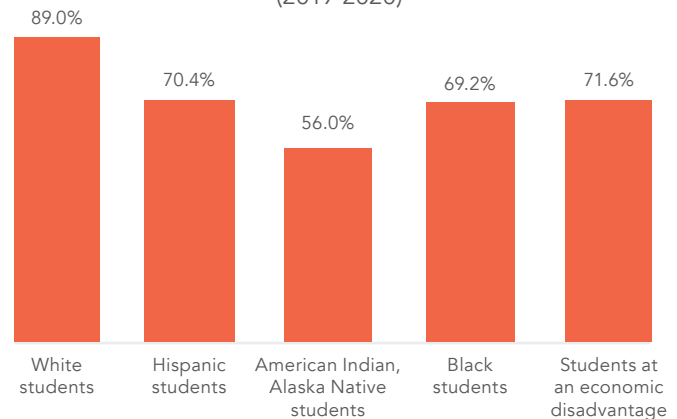
The Situation:

When measuring by race and socioeconomic status, we're faced with a difficult reality:

Minnesota has the third largest opportunity gap in the nation.

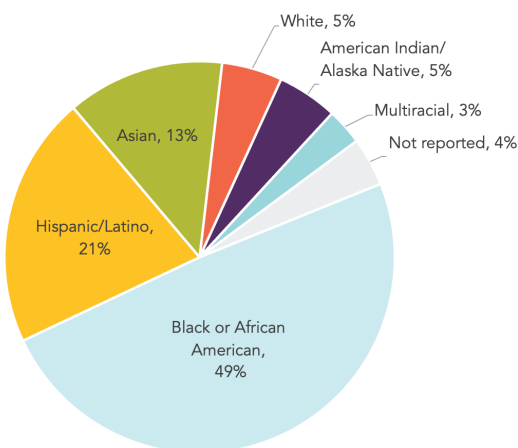
In Minnesota, students of color and students at an economic disadvantage are less likely to graduate high school than their peers in 47 other states.²

Public high school graduation rates in Minnesota (2019-2020)¹



Research and experience has shown us the path forward.

High-quality education beginning at birth is a proven indicator for an entire lifetime of academic achievement.³ In fact, students reading at grade level by third grade are almost four times as likely to graduate high school with a diploma.⁴



Our Families:

2022 Way to Grow Service Demographics

We're closing the opportunity gap.

Way to Grow works across race and socioeconomic barriers to provide the resources and support that families need to thrive.

In 2022, 98% of our pre-k learners entered kindergarten on track!

Our culturally responsive, evidence-based programming begins in the most formative years of a child's life. By starting early, we can build the foundation for a lifetime of academic success.

Equitable access to high-quality early education is the solution Minnesota needs. Together, we're building a brighter future for our next generation.

¹ "Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by race/ethnicity and selected demographic characteristics for the United States, the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: School year 2019–20." National Center for Education Statistics. www.nces.ed.gov/ccd ² "Figure 3. Adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for White and Black public high school students, by state: 2019–20" National Center for Education Statistics. nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/coi/ ³ Grunewald, R. & Nath, A. (2019) "A Statewide Crisis: Minnesota's Education Achievement Gaps." Federal reserve bank of Minneapolis. www.minneapolisfed.org ⁴ Hernandez, Donald J. (2012) "Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence Highschool Graduation." The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

What We Do



Great by Eight: Our Programs and Services

FAMILY SUPPORT 🏠

Working language-to-language whenever possible, Way to Grow Family Educators build trusted relationships with families to support and stabilize life at home.

Way to Grow helps families thrive by providing connections to employment, housing, health, education, and more.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS ❤️

From prenatal care to well-child checkups, our Growing Strong program ensures that children are born healthy and stay healthy.

Family Educators support the physical and social-emotional needs of the entire family, providing health education, parent-child groups, community events, and resources.

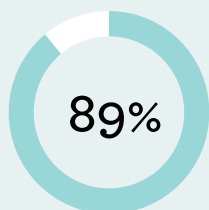
EARLY LEARNING 📖

Through regular home visits, Family Educators guide parents through an understanding of child development, emergent literacy, and social-emotional learning.

Parents learn to use books, hands-on learning games, puzzles, songs, and parent education materials to be their child's first and foremost educator.

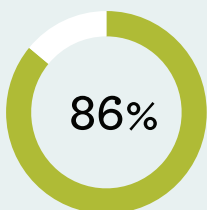
Our Impact in 2022:

HEALTH EDUCATION



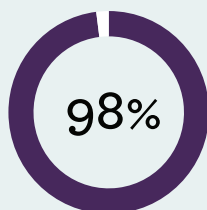
Newborns born at or above a healthy birth weight

TEEN PARENTING



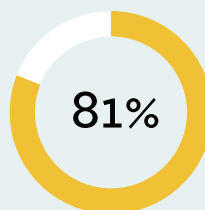
Parenting teens without a repeat pregnancy

EARLY CHILDHOOD



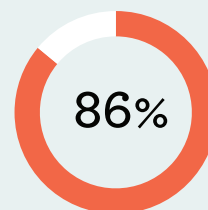
Way to Grow children prepared for kindergarten

ELEMENTARY



K-3 students demonstrated growth in reading level assessments

PARENT ENGAGEMENT



Parents attended one or more parent-teacher conference

PARENT EDUCATION GROUPS

Way to Grow hosts a variety of interactive parent-child education and advocacy groups for families.

Through learning and playing together, family bonds are strengthened, and caregivers are introduced to a supportive community of other Way to Grow families and Family Educators.

DREAM TRACKS

Our Dream Tracks youth parenting program prepares young parents (ages 15-21) for success.

Dream Tracks provides motivation and emotional empowerment, academic and career goal setting, and information on parenting skills and reproductive health.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Way to Grow's elementary programming teaches the foundational literacy components necessary to building essential reading skills.

Parents learn to navigate the education system, build strong parent-teacher connections, and establish academic expectations at home. Way to Grow offers year-round virtual tutoring to help students reach grade level literacy.

CENTER-BASED LEARNING

Way to Grow operates a highly accredited preschool available to enrolled Way to Grow families with children ages 3-5.

Way to Grow's preschool builds positive relationships between families and schools, and prepares children to start kindergarten on track. Programming is centered around the unique interests of each class.

way to grow™



1,850
people served



11,368
home visits



1,362
resource referrals

Shining Memories

from a bright 2022



LANGUAGE-TO-LANGUAGE SUPPORT

Meet Ricardo!

Since moving to Minnesota from his home country of El Salvador, Ricardo has dedicated his life to being a role model for his two sons, Ezequiel (6) and Alexis (10). "He's a very good dad," says their Family Educator, Maria. Ricardo remembers meeting Maria for the first time: "Necesitaba mucho apoyo," shares Ricardo. "I needed a lot of support."

Seeking new ways to increase the family's access to Spanish language resources, Maria introduced Ricardo, Ezequiel, and Alexis to their local public library last fall. Ricardo remembers watching Ezequiel and Alexis run through the library shelves for the first time, laughing together amidst a seemingly endless collection of books, computers, and games.

**"Eso no tiene precio," says Ricardo.
"That's priceless."**

Maria's language-to-language connection has allowed her to build a strong foundation of trust with Ricardo and his boys. When water began creeping into the basement of their family home, Ricardo called Maria for support during a Brooklyn Center city inspection: "She advocated for us and practically demanded that the problem be resolved."

Through resource connections and engagement with community services, Way to Grow Family Educators create a unique network of support that reflects the needs of each individual family. As Ricardo dedicates each day to building a bright future for Alexis and Ezequiel, Maria will be there to offer support, resources, and trusted advice along every step of their journey.



STEM Kits with HDR

In May, Way to Grow welcomed a donation of 144 customized STEM kits from a team of young professionals at HDR, inc.

Each kit was made with Way to Grow families in mind, filled with three hands-on activities to build confidence, creativity, and a sense of curiosity about the great big world around us.



Fundraising events



From cocktails at Quincy Hall to an elegant evening at The Depot, both of Way to Grow's signature fundraising events were hosted in-person this year for the first time since 2019!

With more than 360 guests, and with the help of our generous sponsors and supporters, the Shine Celebration raised over \$400,000 for Great by Eight programming.



Osseo ECCE Partnership

Alongside the Community Education department at Osseo Area Schools, Way to Grow facilitated parent-child classes at Willow Lane Early Childhood Center.

Complete with sensory play and guided activities, these groups will continue into 2023!

On the air

In 2022, Way to Grow was featured on KSTP's "Minnesota Live" with Megan Newquist and Chris Egert, MPR News with Angela Davis, and 89.9 KMOJ's "Power to the Parents" segments.



“ I am so immensely grateful for the Way to Grow program and what it has done for us. ”

Sarah, Way to Grow Parent

Graduation Celebrations

In 2022, we cheered on Way to Grow preschool graduates as they began their next big adventure: kindergarten!

We also celebrated with third graders graduating from Way to Grow's Great by Eight program with a picnic, karaoke, and giant board games in the park.



Thank You!

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Thank You!

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Minnesota Department of Education
Minnesota Department of Health

Thank you to our donors and community partners! Should you have any corrections, updates, feedback, or wish to learn more about how your gift is changing the lives of our families, please contact Way to Grow at 612.874.4740.

The Ciresi Walburn Foundation

In the decades preceding Minnesota's groundbreaking Tobacco Litigation, a multitude of lawsuits on behalf of injured smokers had tried—and failed—to hold cigarette manufacturers accountable.

From 1994 to 1998, a team of Minnesota litigators led by Mike Ciresi and Roberta Walburn representing the State of Minnesota and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota finally unearthed their industry's "smoking guns" amidst a document dump of over 30 million pages from Big Tobacco's defense. A damning series of reports revealed clear patterns of unethical marketing, deceptive research, and strategic messaging aimed to capture both the attention of, and the future nicotine dependency of, American teenagers.

The Foundation was founded after the case concluded in 1998 through fees earned from the litigation.

Today, the Ciresi Walburn Foundation has invested over \$33 million in schools and nonprofit organizations across Minnesota. The Foundation has granted college scholarships with wraparound support for students, and has invested in K-12 schools in a variety of ways, including through reading tutors, curriculum, and instruction supporting the science of reading.

"Since the tobacco industry targeted youth, the Foundation's focus on youth seemed like a natural extension," explains Roberta.



As early and emergent literacy needs surfaced, the Foundation deepened its 15-year partnership with Way to Grow. Grants supporting home visits, K-3rd grade tutoring, and book fairs have resulted in more Minnesota children receiving the tools they need to succeed.

Mike Ciresi and Roberta Walburn also make personal gifts to Way to Grow. But according to Mike, giving alone isn't enough.

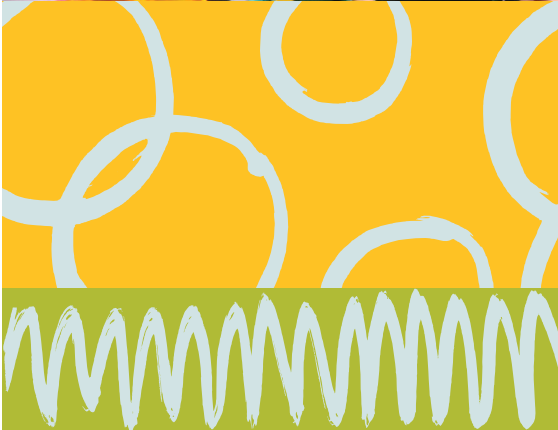
"You have to make sure that the good intentions are resulting in action," says Mike. "In our judgment, Way to Grow is at the top."

Despite the stark reality of Minnesota's wide opportunity gap, Mike shares that his hope remains rooted in a steadfast commitment to serving the common good. "We have a saying: all children are our children. My hope is that we can work in communion with each other so that every child can achieve the full measure of their potential—every single child."

As for the future, Roberta believes the Ciresi Walburn Foundation will remain committed to fighting education inequity alongside data-driven organizations like Way to Grow. "The more we build knowledge, the more impact we can have," she explains. "We'll continue to focus on what we know: going big, going bold, and making a difference."



Family Story



LEARNING TOGETHER

Meet Maurice!

On a chilly Saturday in March, Maurice's laughter fills Way to Grow's playroom. Wearing a dragon onesie, Maurice (7) is eager to show off his reading skills to his sister, Lizzy (10), and his mom, Mary. When asked about Maurice's progress, Mary smiles and says:

"It's a complete 180. Way to Grow gave him confidence."

Last year, Maurice was struggling to stay focused in kindergarten. Big emotions led to classroom outbursts and frustrating suspensions, and Mary found herself often leaving work to pick Maurice up from school early. With the right tools and support, Mary knew Maurice had the potential to succeed.

Mary reached out to Way to Grow and met Roxy, who became her family's Way to Grow Family Educator. Roxy quickly got to work, researching ways to customize the Way to Grow curriculum to capture Maurice's trust and attention.

According to Mary, working with Roxy has been transformative. Through listening games like "Roxy says" and plenty of space to focus, Maurice became familiar with Roxy and quickly began having more positive reactions during home visits.

Mary has learned a lot this year, too. Her most important lesson? "Patience," she says. "How to be more patient as a parent and knowing when to get help."

Mary is a vocal parent advocate for Lizzy and Maurice, and her hard work has paid off. In just one year, Maurice's reading speed has tripled!

Now, Maurice is proud to be a leader and a helper in his first grade classroom. When he learns something new in school, he's eager to tell Roxy. Mary laughs: "He's always asking when Roxy will visit so he can show off."

It's no doubt that Maurice has a bright future ahead. We can't wait to see how far he goes!

Community Connections

AchieveMpls
Allina Health
Aurora Charter School
Anishinabe Academy
BDH
Birth Equity Committee
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota
Broadway Family Medicine Clinic
Bundles of Love
Center for Asian Pacific Islanders
Centro Cultural Chicano
Child and Teen Check-Up
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Dental Services
Children's Hospitals & Clinics of Minnesota
City of Lakes Rotary Club
Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio (CLUES)
Community Emergency Assistance Programs (CEAP)
CommonBond Communities
Cradle of Hope
Cultural Wellness Center
Division of Indian Work
Dresses from Ella
Early Childhood Family Education, Minneapolis and Osseo Districts
Early Childhood Intervention Services of Hennepin County
Early Head Start
East Side Neighborhood Services
Emerge Family Supportive Housing Program
Excelsior Rotary Club
Fairview Health Services & Clinics
The Family Partnership
The FATHER Project
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First Care Centers
Four Directions Early Learning Center
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Minneapolis Public Schools Early Childhood Special Education
Minneapolis Public Schools New Families Center
Minneapolis Public Schools Teen Parent Services
Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children
Minnesota Children's Museum
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center (MIWRC)
Minnesota Twins
Minnesota Workforce Center
My Very Own Bed
Native American Community Clinic
Noble Academy
Northside Achievement Zone
NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center
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PACER Center
Pajama Program – Minnesota Chapter
Park Nicollet Health Services

People Serving People
Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
Pillsbury United Communities
Portico Health Net
Prodeo Academy
Ready Set Smile Dental Services
Richfield Public School Early Childhood Program
Rise Early Learning
Sabathani Community Center
Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health
Salvation Army
St. David's Center
St. Stephen's Human Services
Scott County Public Health
Shiloh International Ministries
Siempre Padres
Simpson Housing Services
Southside Community Clinic
Tandem Family Resource Center
Think Small
UCare
United Health Group
University Life Care Center
University of Minnesota Center for Early Education & Development
University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach/Engagement Center
Urban Ventures
VocalEssence
Wellshare International
Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
Wooddale Church
YMCA Mankato
YouthLink
Zanewood Recreation Center



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Great MN Schools

From Minneapolis School Finder booklets to comprehensive MN Standards Family Guides, our community partners at Great MN Schools publish an array of high-quality resources that Way to Grow Family Educators use during home visits.

These carefully crafted resources support parents in making informed enrollment decisions and advocating for their children. This work is a part of transforming education equity for students of all races, means, and origins.

“The Way to Grow team constantly impresses me with their thoughtful questions and feedback on our resources,” says Rosie Lais, the Director of Community Resources at Great MN Schools. She adds:

“It is clear that their Family Educators deeply understand the K-12 education system and how to help families navigate it.”

Alongside Great MN Schools, Way to Grow is here to ensure that all families feel informed and supported throughout their child’s entire academic journey.



CHANGING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION

Barbara Butts Williams, PhD

Barbara has provided visionary leadership at Capella University for over 20 years, currently as Executive Dean, Social Responsibility and Community Engagement, living out her passion for education.

“I am truly grateful and blessed to be called to serve the community through education,” says Barbara. “Capella’s mission to educate the community and transform people’s lives aligns perfectly with my personal values.” Barbara also sees alignment in partnership with Way to Grow:

“Early childhood education is so necessary. Way to Grow consistently provides tools and resources and offers kids an opportunity to be prepared for school.”

That’s why Barbara and Capella University are faithful donors. “People need support and we are pleased to help where we can.”



Financials

Operating Revenue & Expenses

REVENUE	2021	2022
Contributions	\$450,818	\$569,461
Government	\$932,050	\$832,486
Foundations	\$1,489,700	\$2,196,527
United Way	\$100,741	\$130,015
Program Service	\$164,488	\$291,958
Annual Celebration	\$345,944	\$320,278
Interest & Other Income	\$43,137	(\$71,403)
Total Operating Revenue	\$3,526,878	\$4,269,322
EXPENSES		
Program Services	\$2,153,430	\$2,175,179
Administrative Services	\$362,686	\$434,728
Fundraising Services	\$647,277	\$694,314
Total Operating Expenses	\$3,163,393	\$3,304,221



Financial Position

ASSETS	2021	2022	LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	2021	2022
Current Assets			Current Liabilities		
Cash	\$1,948,601	\$1,914,863	Accounts Payable	\$34,396	\$60,336
Cash Restricted	\$1,133,378	\$1,715,165	Accrued Expenses	\$118,180	\$157,457
Receivables	\$228,286	\$837,688	Operating Lease Liabilities - Current	\$112,302	\$123,040
Prepays	\$4,487	\$45,213	Unearned Revenue	\$0	\$0
Total Current Assets	\$3,314,752	\$4,512,929	Total Current Liabilities	\$264,878	\$340,833
Property & Equipment			Long Term Liabilities		
Furniture & Equipment (net of depreciation)	\$304,611	\$225,724	Operating Lease Liabilities - Noncurrent	\$876,881	\$754,260
			Total Long Term Liabilities	\$1,141,759	\$1,095,093
Other Assets			Net Assets		
Long-Term Receivables	\$25,000	\$25,000	Unrestricted	\$0	\$0
Right to Use Lease	\$900,391	\$788,427	Undesignated	\$794,025	\$1,015,959
Investment - Endowment	\$678,024	\$589,133	Board Designated	\$1,581,697	\$1,652,111
Deposits	\$22,854	\$22,854	With Donor Restrictions	\$1,728,152	\$2,400,904
Total Other Assets	\$1,626,269	\$1,425,414	Total Net Assets	\$4,103,874	\$5,068,974
Total Assets	\$5,245,632	\$6,164,067	Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$5,245,633	\$6,164,067

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Remembering Malcolm McDonald

Malcolm McDonald was a board member of Way to Grow for ten years, a friend, mentor, and a devoted supporter of early childhood education in the Twin Cities.

Malcolm's greatest hope was for every young person to have a fulfilling life, and we are profoundly grateful for his lifetime of service to others.



As one of the Twin Cities' leading advocates for early learning, Way to Grow empowers parents to be their children's first and foremost teachers. Our goal is to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life. Learn how you can help us do even more at **waytogrow.org**.



201 Irving Avenue North Suite 100 Minneapolis, MN 55405

TEL 612.874.4740
FAX 612.874.4757

waytogrow.org

Carolyn Smallwood,
Chief Executive Officer

