



National Center for
Families Learning



2018
ANNUAL REPORT



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Letter from Sharon Darling



As I look back on the past year, I cannot help but smile. Across our many partnerships, I have seen so much growth, so many new initiatives beginning, and so many families working hard to gain a better life. I see impactful policy being introduced, confidence building in each new parent, and children excited with the challenge of learning something new.

Our footprint across the country continues to grow. This year, we received four grants from the U.S. Department of Education to create family engagement communities in Nebraska, Arizona, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Maryland in order to shrink the academic achievement gap between those living in poverty and those not. With the help of several great partners, we expanded our Say & Play With Words early childhood vocabulary-building program from Detroit, Michigan to Louisville, Kentucky. We began new community-driven educational initiatives in Dallas, Texas, and Durham, North Carolina by forging strong coalitions and incorporating parent voice at all tables.

Working towards the betterment of the family is what we are all about here at NCFL— it is the mission that has guided us for nearly 30 years. We have and will continue to lead the way in the two-generation approach, which empowers parents to lift their family out of poverty. Indeed, when families work and learn through NCFL programming, results have shown a 90% increase in family engagement in education, more than two times as many children attaining an attendance rate of 90% or higher, and parents receiving the opportunity to practice 40 of 42 critical employability skills.

We strive to stay true to this mission through our place-based family learning programs as well as our variety of online resources, including [Wonderopolis®](#), the [National Literacy Directory](#), and our growing catalog of [free online professional development](#).

Through the help and support of many, our annual Families Learning Conference continues to grow. This year, our General Session speakers included best-selling author and television host Brad Meltzer, Getting Smart CEO Tom Vander Ark, former Vice President of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes Stanley Holder, and Dr. Sharroky Hollie, who has trained over 150,000 educators in cultural responsiveness. We were pleased to have a 20 percent increase in attendance this year, as more than 700 people from 45 states and three other countries joined us in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

As much as this past year was one of growth, we are looking ahead to new degrees of family learning in the year to come. We will continue to work with partners old and new to implement the two-generation approach and work to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. I offer you my sincere thanks for playing such an instrumental role in changing the lives of generations to come.


President and Founder

About Us

The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. Over our 29-year history, we have changed the lives of millions of families across the country by providing literacy strategies, programming, and resources. Engaging multiple generations of the same family in learning together has been a fundamental and distinguishing aspect of our work. We know this holistic approach creates a stronger impact and greater success for families.

Footprint:

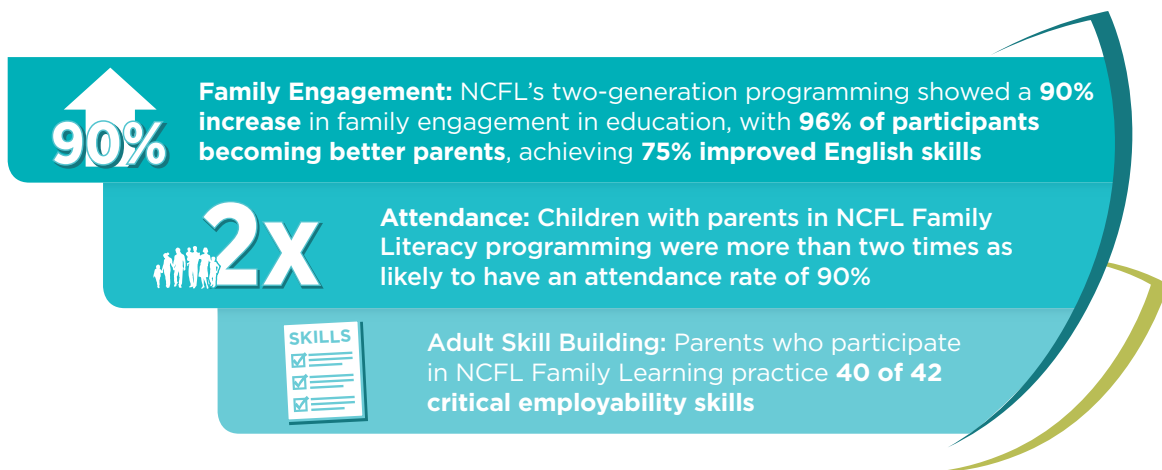
Over the years, NCFL has established a national network of people working towards this mission. At present, family literacy and family learning initiatives occur in more than 140 community partners across 38 states and Washington, D.C. These programs have impacted more than 2 million families throughout NCFL's history.

In addition to its community-based programs, NCFL has created a variety of digital properties, which are utilized by millions of families each year. Two of these alone - the [National Literacy Directory](#) and [Wonderopolis](#) - serve more than 15 million people annually.

Impact:

In the U.S., our primary strategy for passing on the knowledge needed to create stronger communities is formal education. When education engages the entire family, learning outcomes increase exponentially because knowledge and skills are passed from generation to generation.

Creating and promoting this concept of two-generation learning has been the driving factor behind many of the results achieved through the work of NCFL.



Please find more information on our website: familieslearning.org.

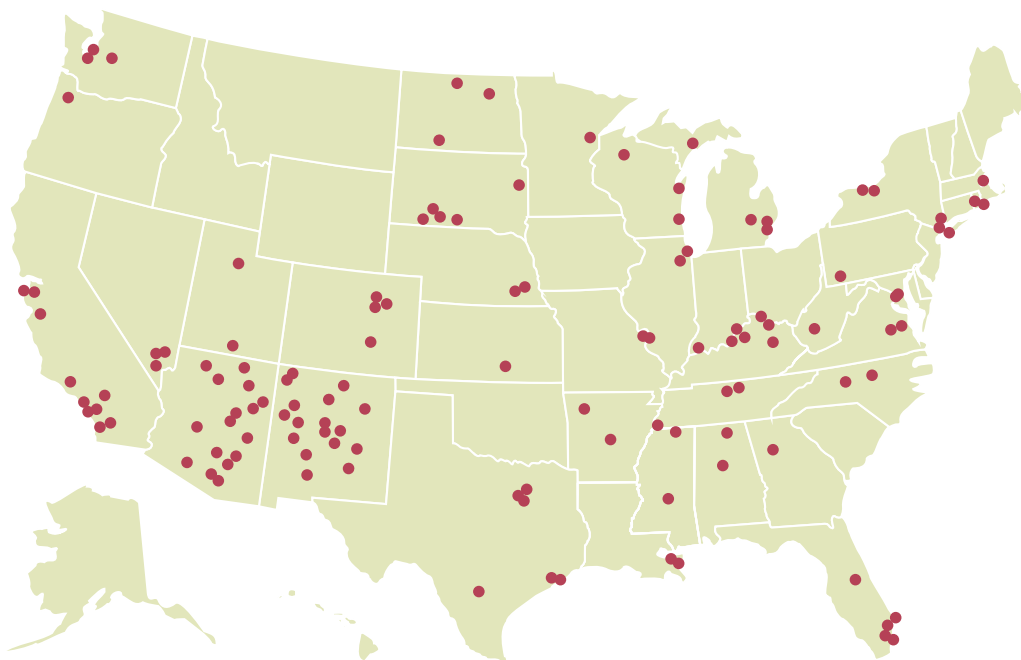
Widespread Family Learning

The implementation of NCFL's Family Learning model continued to scale throughout the U.S. over the past year, gaining more widespread exposure in several cities through a variety of new grants. Towards the end of 2017, the NCFL Family Learning model was [implemented in 20 Mississippi social service centers](#) located throughout the state. Since then, a total of five new Head Start sites implementing family learning have been added in Tupelo.

NCFL also expanded its footprint in Dallas, Texas, Durham, North Carolina, and Louisville Kentucky in 2018. In December, NCFL awarded three Dallas County organizations a two-year \$135,000 grant to implement the Family Literacy or Family Learning model. Over the next two years, NCFL will work closely with the organizations to provide training, technical assistance, and communications support to implement services that engage families in learning together and that address community issues through multi-generational service learning projects. NCFL also initiated its Parent Leadership Institute Program in the Dallas area, which is aimed at collectively activating the leadership skills of Dallas parents who would like to be engaged advocates for their community, and who, with others, want to make constructive community changes.

NCFL is set to unroll a new initiative in Durham as well. In partnership with many local organizations and institutions, NCFL will implement a multi-year, community-level initiative focused on empowering 50 low-income women of color who are residents of Durham. The program will help create equitable opportunities through educational and work-based training, the creation of a co-managed economic opportunity fund, and the promotion of leadership and civic engagement. Work is set to begin in Durham in January 2019.

Site numbers have increased in Louisville as well. NCFL Family Learning programming now exists at nine sites across the city following a new contract with Jefferson County Public Schools.



Statewide Family Engagement

NCFL received more big news in the fall of 2018, when it was selected by the U.S. Department of Education to create [Statewide Family Engagement Communities \(SFEC\) in Arizona, Nebraska, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Maryland](#). NCFL is the lead organization and grantee in Arizona and Nebraska. NCFL will partner with The Prichard Committee to create the SFEC in Kentucky and with the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MEAC) to create SFECs in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The grants come on the heels of the latest Nation's Report Card, which shows flat trend lines for improvement. Across the U.S., there remains a large gap between the academic achievement of students living in poverty and those who have never lived in poverty.

To fight these persisting realities, the SFECs will provide families with family engagement activities and access to digital resources to use at home. Additionally, families in select communities will participate in an NCFL Family Learning model program, which includes adult skill building, Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time®, and Parent Time in which participants learn how to better support their children in and outside of school.



The goals of the SFEC grants will be threefold: to improve academic achievement for disadvantaged students, empower parents of those students with the information and tools to make good choices for their children's education, and to train local and state education providers to administer high-quality family literacy and family engagement services.

In all, the three SFEC grants total more than \$18 million and will be implemented over the next five years. NCFL has hired additional staff members, including two new SFEC Directors for Arizona and Nebraska, to support the initiative. Programming is scheduled to begin in early 2019.

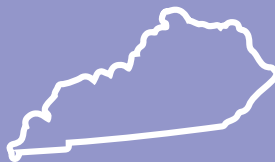
Statewide Family Engagement Communities



Arizona



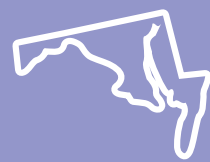
Nebraska



Kentucky



Pennsylvania



Maryland

Words Unlock Success

Say & Play With Words, the community-wide early childhood vocabulary building initiative developed by NCFL and begun in Detroit, Michigan, in 2016, saw noticeable gains in its third year.

At least 921 families participated in Say & Play With Words during the program's third year, attending curriculum on average for 93.2 hours. As a result of the curriculum, parents developed routines of reading to their children multiple times on a weekly basis, with 82.7% of parents/caregivers reading to their children at least three times per week. These routines had a tangible effect, as the average child's exposure to vocabulary and language development stimulation had increased by 6,000 words per week by the end of the six-month cohort.

As children's vocabulary increased, so too did their parents' expectations of eventual academic outcomes. Of the 29 families who participated in a Parent Leadership cohort of the Say and Play With Words program, 28 (or 96.5%) said they expect their child to earn a college degree.

Professional development was also a cornerstone of Say & Play With Words in 2018. In-person and digital professional development workshops were delivered to 385 formal and informal early childhood providers throughout Detroit using research-based proven strategies and Say & Play materials, exceeding a goal of 250. A total of 1,866 children were directly cared for by the Childhood Development Center providers, and potentially affected by the workshops.



In October, PNC Grow Up Great®, Lift A Life Foundation, Metro United Way's Ready for K Alliance, Louisville Metro Government and NCFL [announced a more than \\$250,000 collaboration to support Say & Play With Words across Louisville, Kentucky.](#)



This campaign will target at-risk children in Louisville neighborhoods, with a goal of shrinking the word gap and increasing kindergarten readiness. Utilizing paid commercial time, billboards, and city bus advertisements, Say & Play With Words will equip parents with free vocabulary-building tips and activities – found on [SayandPlayWithWords.org](#) – to use at home or on the go; build upon NCFL's existing Family Learning efforts underway in Louisville; and will provide training for professionals working with children and families.

To learn more about the Say & Play With Words initiative, visit [SayandPlayWithWords.org](#).

Extending Our Digital Reach

At NCFL, we continue to realize and emphasize the importance that technology can play on learning in the 21st century. Through a variety of mediums, we increased our digital focus over the past year.

Say & Play With Words

New digital strategies enabled parents to observe real results in the Detroit Say & Play With Words program. Before beginning the Say & Play program, parents synched Starling word counter devices with their iPads or smartphones. Initially, the devices documented initial word counts as low as 8,000 words per day for a single child. After two months of data recording, word counts of up to 27,000 words a day for a single child were recorded. Through this technology, parents were able to view graphs of peak talking times and quiet times in the home.



SAY & PLAY
WITH WORDS

Google

NCFL also partnered with the global digital leader in 2018. In May, a partnership was forged with Google to bring the Applied Digital Skills curriculum to family literacy and learning practitioners. Over 500 participants learned all about the free, video-based online curriculum, which is designed to prepare teenagers and adults for the evolving job market. Applied Digital Skills teaches project-based digital skills that are relevant to real-life situations like event planning, budgeting, creating a guide to an area, finding a job, and more.

Google



Wonderopolis®

[Wonderopolis](#), NCFL's largest digital property, continued to expand its online presence. Over 12 million unique visitors came to the Wonderopolis site in 2018, contributing to over 38 million page views.



Camp Wonderopolis®

[Camp Wonderopolis](#), a free, online summer camp designed to combat summer learning loss, became even easier to use in 2018 with the development of an app. Children could explore topics related to this year's theme—[Symphony of Wonders](#)—with just the tap of a finger.

Three libraries across the country explored the sound of music after being awarded grants to become Camp Wonderopolis campsites in 2018. Clinton Hill Library in New York, Jan Moran Collier City Learning Library in Florida, and Lincoln Heritage Public Library in Indiana all participated in the digital learning program.

At Clinton Hill, Children's Librarian Brian Muldoon said participants had a great time building a very unique set of headphones together.



"Using some plastic industrial tubing, funnels, zip-ties, and a generous amount of duct tape, we had our campers create crazy 'sound flipping headphones' that channels all the sound coming from your right side to your left ear and all the sound from your left side to your right ear," Muldoon said. "The results are a little weird and a bit disorienting, but totally cool! They also offer a unique way to explore the way sound travels and how the brain processes auditory information."

CAMP WONDEROPOLIS

Promoting Literacy at All Levels

Through a new grant, more than a dozen [Family and Child Education \(FACE\)](#) program schools will receive additional resources to better prepare children for both early and primary education.

The Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Grant Program is being implemented in 13 current FACE schools during the 2018-19 school year. The grant has several main goals, including the increase of early language development, educational transition improvement, and the provision of better reading strategies.

Through efforts carried out by the FACE staff, families and communities will be engaged in addressing early language development at the 13 sites. They will also work to strengthen transitions both from the home to preschool and from early education to primary education. Finally, NCFL team members will work to ensure that children have opportunities to learn to read so that they can read to learn. Throughout the year, participating schools will work together to help improve the coordination of services in Tribal communities as well.

As with many NCFL endeavors, community empowerment will be paramount to the overall success of this project. Though the FACE team will coordinate many of the efforts, the goal is for the respective schools and communities as a whole to be involved.



The SRCL grant to the FACE program stems from the BIE through Title 1 funds. The FACE program is funded by the BIE, and also supported by the work of NCFL, Parents As Teachers National Center (PAT), and Research and Training Associates (RTA), who work in partnership to provide high-quality training and technical assistance and evaluation.

The FACE program was initiated in 1990, and currently has 49 programs in BIE communities. It was designed as a family literacy program; an integrated model for an early childhood/parental involvement program for American Indian families. Evaluation indicates that FACE programs are succeeding in addressing achievement gaps for American Indian children primarily located on rural reservations, and in better preparing them for school.

Connecting with Community

Refugees work to help others in their new hometown

Over the past year, refugees who have been welcomed by many in their new hometown of Louisville, Kentucky received a chance to return the favor.



The Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS)-Americana program, an NCFL Family Learning partner site in Louisville, began in 2017. Made up of immigrants and refugees who still hold clear memories of their challenging transition to the U.S., the program incorporates Family Service Learning, enabling these refugees to give back to the community that has since provided for them.

“One of the things I hear often from my friends and students who are refugees is, ‘I want to be able to help people again,’” said parent facilitator Kristy Robison.

Through Family Service Learning, refugees in the JCPS-Americana program are given the tools to do just that.

In one project implemented at the end of last year, the group of adult and child refugees worked to brainstorm who they wanted to help in the local community, ultimately deciding to make welcome bags to distribute to the Survivors of Torture Recovery Center (STRC).

A variety of tasks were divided up and conquered. After all worked to create a list of items to use in the welcome bags, some participants reached out to potential receiving agencies, while others were tasked with creating a donations flyer. All joined to create handmade welcome cards as well.

Participants asked their friends and teachers for donations while bringing in goods and money themselves. At the project’s completion, the group hand-delivered the welcome bags to the STRC.

“These families remember what they had that improved life in a new country,” said JCPS adult education ESL program specialist Ashley Boyd Pierce. “The families identified and utilized their strengths, developed new skills, and worked collectively as a group to complete this project. They were also able to reflect on how much they have grown and adapted to life in a new country and culture.



A variety of skills were practiced during this project, including resource identification, computer skills, and communication skills. Family Service Learning has proven to provide a plethora of additional benefits, including increased school engagement, civic participation, and leadership capabilities.

Moving Forward Together

[NCFL's annual Conference](#) fosters numerous successes each year, but at its core, it excels most in uniting many into one. From across the world, many individuals come together in support of one common cause – to help families get out of poverty through education solutions. This year was no different.

Over 700 people from 45 U.S. states, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Colombia gathered in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, from Sept. 24-26 for the [2018 Families Learning Conference](#). The multi-sector convening brought together educators, social service providers, librarians, policymakers, and funders with the focus of sharing resources, strategies, and tools to use in their respective communities and with families everywhere. Total attendance marked a 20 percent increase from 2017.



A variety of insightful keynote speakers filled the rooms with thought-provoking, inspirational, and challenging ideas. Dr. Sharroky Hollie kicked things off by sharing how cultural responsiveness can be used to increase family engagement, address inequities, and give outrageous love to those we serve. [Stanley Holder](#) discussed the challenges of building the Acoma education system for Native Americans, about healing the wounds of the community, and how family and early childhood learning are keys to establishing a generational pattern and expectation of success.



Best-selling author and television host Brad Meltzer stressed that ordinary people can make an extraordinary impact on many lives without even knowing it. He reminded the audience to say 'Thank You' to those who have helped us along the way, and through everyday actions, pay it forward and leave a legacy of impact on others. Finally, Tom Vander Ark stretched minds one last time through discussion of how artificial intelligence is shaping our world, and what emerging literacies and skills students need to hone to succeed in our future economy.

Inspiration came in the form of NCFL student speakers such as [LaDelvin Walker](#), [Rocio Cisneros](#), [Ethan McKenzie](#), and [Candice Namoki](#).

As a child, LaDelvin's family lost both her father and a brother to unexpected, tragic events. The grief that resulted led to academic struggle for both LaDelvin and her two children. In time, she enrolled in the Christ Enrichment Center Flint Family Literacy Program, a local partner of NCFL, and spent up to 20 hours a week for a year learning how to help her children with their schooling, building her own skills, and forming a supportive network of other families in the program. LaDelvin ultimately earned her GED®, and was asked by the Flint & Genesee Literacy Network to join their team as the family literacy system navigator.



Rocio grew up on the U.S.-Mexican border as the youngest of five. Though she loved to read as a child, she did not have access to many educational materials. After having children of her own, she decided to move to Plano, Texas and enroll her family in programming at Plano Family Literacy School (PFLS), a local partner of NCFL.



Rocio eventually honed her English and academic skills and earned her GED®, and in 2003, she was offered a position as an early childhood assistant at PFLS. Ten years later, she received her Associate of Arts in Education from Collin Community College.

Today, Rocio's children are thriving. Her oldest son Kevin, 24, just finished an enlistment with the U.S. Marine Corps. Her daughter Kim, 21, is a junior biology major at the University of Texas, Dallas. Emily, 17, is a senior in high school exploring options for college, and her youngest, Heidi, is an 8th grader who loves theatre and is very involved in school.

"From my personal experience, I completely see how families can change their fate when they get an education. I have witnessed in my own children how education creates positive change," she said.

When Ethan McKenzie was only 16, he witnessed his mother having a heart attack. Tragedy struck again when the mother to his three daughters became addicted to prescription pain medication following multiple car wrecks.

Ethan subsequently became a single father and began attending the NCFL Family Learning program at 2NOT1 Fatherhood and Families.

Within a matter of four months, Ethan and his daughters went from staying with family friends to securing their own house. He got a job with the Board of Education and has recently begun looking into furthering his education in the education field.

Finally, Candice Namoki is a member of the Hopi tribe of the Tobacco clan in Arizona and a mother of four. She and her son Cameron are participants in the Family and Child Education (FACE) family literacy program for American Indian families. Candice was a stay-at-home mom for many years before she came to the FACE program. Now, she is close to earning her GED®.

Leading by Example

“As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.”

– Bill Gates

True leaders come from many backgrounds and in many forms, but share one vital characteristic that allows them to effect lasting change—they work for the betterment of those around them.

Beth Detwiler is one such leader. Beth, who teaches family literacy to adult learners in Oakland Unified Public Schools in Oakland, California, was [named the 2018 Toyota Family Teacher of the Year](#).

“Beth was chosen because of her innovative ways of helping parents reach their goals, reach self-sufficiency, and support their children and their academic achievement,” said NCFL Vice President Josh Cramer. “She really stood out because of her ability to do new and innovative things in the classroom to get people excited about learning.”

Beth accepted her award at the Families Learning Conference in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in September.

In September 2017, NCFL accepted a very prestigious award of its own. Our president and founder Sharon Darling, who has led NCFL for nearly 30 years, accepted the [American Prize](#) and \$50,000 on behalf of NCFL at the Library of Congress National Book Festival gala in Washington, D.C.

The Library of Congress Literacy Awards originated in 2013 by philanthropist David M. Rubenstein to honor organizations working to promote literacy and reading in the U.S. and worldwide. NCFL was recognized as doing exemplary, innovative, and replicable work.



“It is an honor for the National Center for Families Learning to be recognized by the Library of Congress among many outstanding organizations,” said Darling. “This award represents our efforts, but the honor belongs to the millions of families who have taken ownership to improve their own lives over the past 28 years.”

NCFL's Board of Directors is a diverse group including researchers and business executives who help us champion the cause of family literacy. They understand that literacy is the foundation for national economic well-being and local community progress.

Board of Directors

FY2018 (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018)

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Financial Information

July 1, 2017 — June 30, 2018

Income

Corporations, foundations, and individuals	\$1,352,898
Federal and state grants	\$134,461
Contract services/registration fee income	\$2,409,234
Endowment income	\$825,016
Other income	\$52,480

Total	\$4,774,089
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Expenses

Literacy programs	\$5,312,690
Development and fundraising	\$567,385
Management and administration	\$982,953

Total	\$6,863,028
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Change in Net Assets	\$2,088,939
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Net Assets End of Year	\$14,327,468
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