



ABC
Head Start Society

ANNUAL REPORT



2022-2023

"Head Start promotes within parents and children a feeling of accomplishment and self-worth. It provides a series of success experiences."

- Aleda Patterson, ABC Head Start founder, 1989

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Many things have changed since 1989, when Aleda wrote the words at the top of this page. However, the focus and impact of ABC Head Start Society remain the same. Through the pages of this report, you will read about many caregivers and children who left ABC equipped with the confidence and self-worth Aleda described, which will prepare them for a resilient life.

We estimate that ABC Head Start has served more than 10,000 children in Edmonton over the past 38 years. There is a good chance someone in your network attended an ABC Head Start program as a child and we hear all the time, in the most unexpected places, what a difference ABC made in the lives of our peers, colleagues and friends. To keep these services accessible for everyone who needs them, the team at ABC Head Start spent this year strengthening the organization and adjusting to our "new normal".

Our sincere gratitude goes out to all the supporters and partners who have helped us weather major changes in the Human Services sector. Many local foundations and individual donors have inspired us by showing up to fill gaps in funding (page 6). They fortify our community with an unwavering commitment to children in Edmonton and make sure every child gets a fair shot at a full and successful life.



ABC Head Start has always served families with limited resources, but it is harder than ever for children to gain access to these life-changing supports. In order to be funded, children need to fit into an increasingly complex mold to gain eligibility through one of the existing funding models ABC Head Start relies on. Five years ago, ABC Head Start served more than 100 children every year whose only vulnerability was low income, because we know that children with less resources tend to have fewer experiences in the early years and start school developmentally behind their peers. We call these "community spaces", which are available to any child whose family has limited financial resources. Unfortunately, ABC Head Start has precious few community spaces in the sector's "new normal". There are still hundreds of families seeking these spaces but funding eligibility often requires a diagnosis, focusing on intervention for a condition that is already diagnosed rather than starting upstream and offering preventative programming to children who are considered 'at risk'. Out of 854 applications for service in 2022, we were unable to serve 499 children because their situation did not align with the changing priorities of our primary funders.

To respond to this need, ABC Head Start has laid the groundwork to pilot a licensed preschool at Lorelei-Beaumaris Community League, where low-income families are prioritized. Programming will be designed to lessen the impacts of poverty and reduce or eliminate the feelings of failure, frustration, and isolation that can come with financial hardship. Here, children will get a head start built on prevention and 38 years of experience. ABC Head Start's other sites will continue offering the same high quality educational services for children with diagnosed learning delays, such as speech therapy, classroom supports, and parenting courses.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us through this recovery period, and to all the early learning heroes working in ABC Head Start classrooms and supporting the caregivers whose words and stories of gratitude you will read on the pages of this annual report.

April MacDonald Killins
Executive Director

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For more information please email:
volunteer@abcheadstart.org

We respectfully acknowledge that ABC Head Start Society operates within Treaty 6 Territory, the traditional gathering place of diverse Indigenous Peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation; whose contributions continue to enrich the fabric of our society. We recognize our role in creating a just and prosperous future for every child.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION IS A CRITICAL BUILDING BLOCK FOR LEARNING AND LIFE

This past year at ABC Head Start, we met a child with such fierce anxiety it prevented him from participating in class. Luckily, his Education Assistant Shannon had some tricks up her sleeve! She noticed he was very interested in the craft feathers, so she taught him to use a feather to regulate his emotions by holding the feather between two fingers and blowing air through its fibres. This strategy was driven by the child's interests and they found it effective to focus the mind while also encouraging deep breathing and calming energy. The child would do this, at first alongside Shannon, and found the calm that came with it.



Soon he was bringing a feather in his pocket everywhere he went! He never forgot the feather at home because what it gave him was so important.

Whenever the emotions would get big and tears welled up in his eyes, he would take the feather out of his pocket (eventually unprompted) and blow through its fibres until he felt better. By the month of April, his teachers noticed he wasn't using the feather as much and he had overcome his biggest hurdle! He successfully transitioned himself off of the feather once he learned he could calm himself down, and he left ABC Head Start with so much confidence!



"[After attending head start] my child is now expressing her emotions, if she need something she is trying to tell us even some words still not yet clear but we are so proud because she talk a lot, she really improved so much! We are so thankful."

ABC HEAD START PARENT



ABC HEAD START HAS ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY IN EVERY CLASS

Many children at ABC Head Start are still developing a vocabulary and some are not using words to communicate. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a system where images and tiles are used to help a child communicate. At ABC, we are thrilled to use high-tech AAC devices in every single classroom, thanks in part to a grant from the Government of Canada.

We also have a set of loaner AAC devices that can go home with children who rely on AAC to have a voice. Whether a child is at ABC, the playground, daycare, or at home, our speech language pathology team is dedicated to providing the tools they need to communicate, find play partners, and be successful!



"My son has changed a lot since he started school. He was a very aggressive child who cried a lot and hit other children, now he doesn't hit anyone and he can tell us what he wants. Words are becoming clearer and sentence formation is way better than before. He loves going to the school every day!"

– ABC HEAD START PARENT

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR HELPS US COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN

PRIM'S* AMAZING JOURNEY

*Child's name has been changed to protect his identity.

Prim came to us when he was three years old, his parents described him being "in his own little world", not speaking, with a low interest in peers and adults and a big love for "hot wheels" cars. His love for cars was so big that he would tantrum and hurt peers who wanted to play with them. His play was repetitive, he'd align the cars and watch them from different angles. He was not yet toilet trained, and his separation anxiety was high.

The ABC Head Start team had a meeting where we pondered the questions:

- Do we take the cars away since sometimes they are a source of high conflict in the room?
- Do we use them to build his trust and engagement with us?

At the same time, we knew that we needed to help him become more flexible with his toys.

We decided to go with the second option. We created a corner in the class where Prim could interact and play with cars. It would be his safe space away from home, where he had something familiar. The staff would go into his safe space to play with him and let him come and explore the room on his terms. Ensuring that there were enough cars and toys for other children, we would allow Prim to have his own while teaching the others that Prim was still learning to speak and share.

Over the next few months:

- His separation anxiety got better- he would come into the room running, ready to play in his corner.
- He allowed the adult in his space to interact with him and the cars more and more.
- His play became more functional- bring cars on the car ramp and watch them come down.
- He would keep a car in his hand and leave the rest to his peers.
- He started participating in other activities- at first watching, then exploring, then requesting- grabbing the adult, pointing.
- We learned that his behaviour of running back and forth meant he needed to use the bathroom. We showed him the bathroom visual, and soon, he requested to go by pointing at the visual.
- He developed a strong attachment with one educator at ABC. He started playing chase with her, requesting to play and saying some words! The rest of the team followed her lead and she continued to be his safe person away from home while he was exploring and building relationships with other adults and peers. Soon, Prim played and interacted with others, building relationships with everyone in his classroom.

- His tantrums decreased in frequency. He now understands turn-taking and takes turns with others when using toys.
- He has a great sense of humor. He loves laughing while playing in the soapy water!

By the end of the school year, Prim was participating in all classroom activities. He loved circle time and would make sure the teacher followed the schedule. Through partnership with family and school, Prim was toilet trained.

He came back for a second year with ABC Head Start. We all watch him flourish and grow. He talks using sentences and will surprise us often with his comments and questions.



This story is a perfect example of the work ABC Head Start educators do to decode a child's behaviour and sleuth out the support needs and strategies that will work for them. The ABC team in this story learned the behaviour cues that led to Prim's toilet use, they learned what Prim was communicating by protecting his toy cars at all costs. At ABC Head Start, Prim and his peers are '*mighty learners*' and their teachers, education assistants, and clinical support team honour the determination and resilience behind his behaviours while they build his next layer of life skills.

In partnership with the Edmonton Head Start Project, ABC Head Start has a new publication that digs deeper into understanding and supporting complex behaviours in the early learning classroom.

Follow this link to view the full report, prepared by University of Alberta's Community University Partnership (CUP):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Q7TS5fFKXg-0ycNrtG4N4y_KdUcpdYN/view?usp=sharing

"My child speaks in a sentence now, know rules and accept or refuse, this is a big step for a young child and he will be ahead when start kindergarten. I am very satisfied with the outcome and happy. He is more confident in and around the house."

-- ABC HEAD START PARENT



YEAR AT A GLANCE...



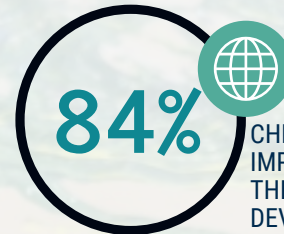
PARENTS SAW IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR CHILD'S JOY FOR LEARNING



CHILDREN HAVE A BRIGHTER FUTURE



FAMILIES SERVED HAD INCOMES LESS THAN \$49,020 WITH AN AVERAGE OF 3 CHILDREN PER HOUSEHOLD



CHILDREN SHOWED IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT & MOTOR SKILLS



FAMILIES ARE READY TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL



PARENTS & CAREGIVERS ARE MORE PREPARED TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT



ABC Parents...



COME FROM

62

DIFFERENT COUNTRIES



SPEAK

52

DIFFERENT LANGUAGES



55%

OF ABC HEAD START FAMILIES ARE MULTILINGUAL

TOP 6 LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH: Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya, Urdu, Punjabi, Tagalog/Filipino

Did you know that in Alberta:



- One in every four children in kindergarten has trouble or great difficulty in their social and/or emotional maturity. (MacEwan, 2016)



- Centres are 34 times more likely to turn away children with mental health or behavioural concerns. (Penney et Al. 2019))



- Challenging Behaviour is the primary reason parents are asked to withdraw their child. (Penney et Al. 2019))

ABC Head Start Society is a registered charity which has been committed to promoting and supporting children, families, and communities in Edmonton for over 38 years.

AGHMED*, THE SUCCESSFUL NEW CANADIAN.

* Child's name has been changed to protect his identity

Aghmed and his family moved to Canada recently and, during intake, our team identified him as a candidate to attend our program as a community child**.

Mum and dad didn't know how to dress him for the weather, and he was sent to school overdressed, with gloves, scarf and heavy jacket in summer time. He was not able to dress and undress by himself. He was shy and was not speaking as he did not understand any English at the time.

ABC Head Start was able to provide a translator which really helped the parents open up and ask for help. We found out the child needed urgent dental work. He was not sleeping at night and was sleepy during class. Our Family Engagement Worker, Leidia, was able to work with the family and connect with Health Services to have his adenoids removed as they were affecting his sleep cycle. He later was able to sleep at night and was very active in class. Working with the parents, our team was able to help them enhance their skills with their child. Their parenting style became more open and accepting, allowing Aghmed to be independent and do things that create a foundation for life skills.

Aghmed's improvement was huge, he started to experiment with English words, was always happy playing and sharing with his classmates and even helped some of them with tasks such as tying their shoes and zipping their jackets. By the end of the year, Aghmed was ready to go to kindergarten and has the skills and self confidence to enjoy school in Canada.

**** Community children are those in need of our program for reasons different than a diagnosed condition. It could be financial issues (low income), family violence, newcomers to Canada, drug abuse or many other factors that make a family vulnerable to missing out on their full health and educational potential. These children are funded by ABC Head Start's amazing community supporters (including private companies, individuals, and family foundations).**



"It's always the unknown [that is hard] – once you know, you can work with it and improve."

This is a quote used by our Family Engagement Worker to explain how she gained trust with the parents and helped them support their child in new ways.

Types of Program Spaces at ABC Head Start:

Spaces Based on Diagnosis – Reserved for children with a diagnosed learning delay or condition that requires extra support before Kindergarten. These spaces are primarily funded by Alberta Education.

Community Spaces – Reserved for children facing family vulnerabilities such as Aghmed's story above. These spaces are much harder to secure funding for and are now primarily funded by the community (individual donors, corporate donors, and family foundations)

This year, ABC Head Start was unable to accept 499 children whose parents applied for programming. In most cases, they were only eligible for a Community Space and we have precious few of those available due to funding constraints. ABC Head Start's program is life changing for families facing economic hardship and, unfortunately, these spaces are difficult to fund. [The best way to help ABC continue with families like Aghmed's is to make a donation to our Community Preschool: abcheadstart.org/donate](https://abcheadstart.org/donate)

*Funding for all children at ABC is augmented by the Federal Government (CAPC), the City of Edmonton (FCSS), and other funding streams shown on page 6.



LORELEI-BEUMARIS COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL: POWERED BY ABC HEAD START



Set to open in the coming year, this preschool will mark a new partnership between ABC and the Lorelei-Beaumaris Community League. The centre will support families to overcome the impacts of poverty in their child's pre-school years.

This program will be available to families with low-income. We are currently raising funds and developing partnerships with a goal to offer low parent-fees and reduce barriers, such as transportation and food insecurity.

"My child's successes or progress this year are sharing or waiting his turn when he is playing with peers, listening to his parents, more confidence to his ability." – ABC HEAD START PARENT

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS



Adebayo Oyeniyi
Aimco
Alberta Education
Alberta Gaming, Liquor, and Cannabis
Alberta Jobs Now Program
Alyssa Ilich
April MacDonald Killins
Ashley Cristofori
ATB Financial
ATCO
ATCO - Employees
ATCO EPIC Program
Brian Mofford
Butler Family Foundation
Canada Alberta Jobs Grant
Canadahelps Covid-19 Fund
Canadian Red Cross - CSRF Grant
Carol Cameron
Catherine Garvin
Charlene Elder
Christina Mason
Christmas Bureau
CIBC
City of Edmonton - ETS
City Serve YEG / Saints Church
Civil Society
Community Action Program for Children (CAPC)
Costco Wholesale Canada Ltd.
Cynthia Lenora Pilkington
Cynthia Soneff
Dale Short
Debra Wooding
Diane Sinclair

ECF - ABCHS Society Endowment Fund
ECF - Babb / Murchison Fund
ECF - Eldon & Ann Foote Fund
ECF - Kathy Lenihan Fund
ECF - L&J Anderson Learning Resource Fund
ECF - Moffat Family Fund
Edm Civic Emp Charitable Assist Fund (ECECAF)
Edmonton Food Bank
ETS (Donate a ride)
Edm Public Teachers Local 37 Charity Trust Fund
Estate of J. Gregory Greenough
Esther Ohayon
Family & Community Support Svs (FCSS)
Federated Co-operatives Ltd.
Fred Patton
Genesis Control Systems
Government of Canada - Jordan's Principle
Graciela Morales
Gwen Harris
Jaime Cordoba
James Boyes
Jim & Pauline Drinkwater
John & Dianne Storey Family Foundation
Josefina Evardone
Justice Johnson
Karen Cooper
Katie Halford
Kevin & Roxanne Zowtuk
Kim Reinhardt
Kiwanis Club of Edmonton
Laura Walker
Leah Tolton
Leasure Forbes

Maria Auxiliadora Petit Gonzalez
Mary Anne Vale
Matthew Babb
Maysoon Mahmoud
Melissa Gee
Metta Yoga
Michael Huot
Michael Seneka
M.J.Jenkins Family Foundation
Monica Jaramillo
Muthuukaruppan Muthiah
North Central Co-op
Patricia Hartnagel
Paulina Ho
Perry & Patricia Lemay
Pledgeling Foundation
Pooja Gandhi
Robert Proznik
Rochelle Wilson
Rogers - Employee Matching
Royal Mayfair Golf Club Ltd.
S. Ragini Surendran
Shores Jardine LLP
Siju Thomas
Susan Bonar
Syed Zeeshan Athar
Tariq Altamimi
Telus Friendly Future Foundation
Unite for Change
Volvo of Edmonton
Wendy Gnenz
Wes Patterson

Our Beliefs

Vision Statement

All children have equal access to a full and successful life.

Mission Statement

Raising families out of poverty and helping children harness their superpowers, conquer hardships, and live their best life.

Strategic Priorities

- Reach children who need us
- Promote ABC in the community
- Maintain financial sustainability
- Collaborate for exceptional programming
- Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion

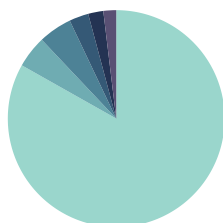
You can make a difference in the life of a child by donating to ABC Head Start online at:
abcheadstart.org/donate

2022-2023

FUNDS

RECEIVED & DISBURSED

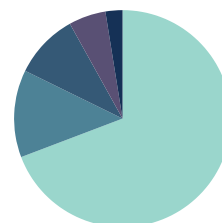
FUNDS
RECEIVED



TOTAL: \$7,177,747

- Alberta Education
- City of Edmonton - FCSS
- Other Government Funding
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Foundation Grants & Endowments
- Donations, Fundraising, Service Fees & Other Revenue

FUNDS
DISBURSED



TOTAL: \$7,249,726

- Staffing
- Client Transportation
- Program Costs (Supplies/Services/Equipment)
- Rent & Building Maintenance
- Non-Operational Costs

ABC Head Start incurred operational costs of 7,061,703.
ABC also incurred the following non-operational costs:
Amortization \$49,622
Liabilities relating to prior years \$134,120

OUR LOCATIONS

Millbourne Market Mall Campus:

Located in Millbourne Market Mall
3697 Mill Woods Road

Westmount Campus:

Located in Winnifred Steward Association
11130 131 Street NW

North Campus:

Located in Delwood School
7315 Delwood Road NW

Central Office:

Jerry Forbes Centre for Community Spirit
12122 68 Street NW

2022-23 was our last year in **Aleda Patterson School**, marking the end of a special partnership with the school community holding the namesake of our founder, Aleda.

Two new sites at **Mill Woods Town Centre Mall** and **Lorelei-Beaumaris Community League** will be opening in 2024!

DONATE TODAY:

Charitable No: 137044962RR0001



780.461.5353



www.abcheadstart.org



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