

Adventure Awaits



Friends and Supporters,

On a sunny sticky July day, I watched VOCEL's eleven graduates march into preschool graduation— complete with the smallest caps and gowns I'd ever seen. This graduation was as much a milestone for VOCEL as it was for these young learners. In a room packed with VOCEL families, volunteers, board members and staff, we celebrated our children, their potential and their futures. There was pomp and circumstance, lots of posing for pictures, a few tears of joy and, of course, cake.

Four years ago, Jesse Ilhardt and I started a new adventure when we launched VOCEL. VOCEL's preschool has thrived for the past two years, providing exceptional, high-quality early education to children on the west side of Chicago. With the preschool's success came community demand for additional programming and more robust family supports. As we entered VOCEL's third year of programming, we excitedly launched the VOCEL Child Parent Academy (VCPA), an early learning accelerator for parent and child.

The VCPA provides an early start to create life-long learners while coaching parents to embrace their role as their child's first and best teacher.

Our work is possible because of the steadfast support we receive from our donors, volunteers, board members, family members and community advocates. From the VOCEL family, we would like to express our deepest gratitude for your constant support of our program. We have come a long way since our humble beginnings in 2012, and our accomplishments are owed in great part to your belief and trust in our children. Your faith in the promise of our mission is not only an investment in our community, but ultimately in the future of our country.

With deep appreciation,



Kelly Lambrinatos
Executive Director & Co-Founder



VOCEL Co-Founders Jesse Ilhardt and Kelly Lambrinatos at VOCEL's 2016 Summer Soiree



Board Chairman Barbara Koren greets guests at VOCEL's 2015 Inaugural Early Expressions Luncheon



Outdoor Adventure There are few childhood memories quite like transforming into your favorite superhero with a face-painted mask. VOCEL's annual family picnic brings the whole family together and gives kids time to enjoy being kids with face paint, piñatas, barbecue and bags.

Why invest early?



- **90% of the brain is developed by age 5**; 80% developed by age 3
- During the first 3 years of a child's life, the brain produces **700 new neural connections per second**
- Social Economist and Nobel Prize-Winner James Heckman has proven a **\$7 to \$1 ROI on early childhood investments**

Why put language first?



- Research has found a **30 million word gap** between children on welfare and their more affluent peers by age 3
- The number of words a child is exposed to between ages 0-3 is significantly correlated to the **child's academic success** and ultimate IQ

Why work with children exposed to trauma?



- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) – including instances of abuse or neglect, having an incarcerated parent or a parent experiencing addiction – expose children to toxic stress, putting them at **greater risk for disease, homelessness, prison time and early death**
- Safe, stable, nurturing relationships between children and caregivers act as a **buffer against the effects of toxic stress**

VOCEL's Impact

94% of VOCEL's graduates leave **ready for kindergarten**



Vocabularies grow 28 months' worth in just 12 months at VOCEL

Graduates of VOCEL's Preschool leave with vocabularies **equivalent to first graders**



Parents are **extremely satisfied** – 4.7 on a 5.0 scale



Kindergarten Adventure VOCEL's support doesn't stop after preschool; we know our kids have a whole new adventure ahead of them as they embark on their academic career. Our team assists families on their new adventure – kindergarten, and we love following children's progress during monthly phone calls to each VOCEL graduate.

Nehemiah's Story

Nehemiah joined VOCEL's inaugural class in September 2014. While very active and eager to explore in the classroom, Nehemiah was quiet and didn't express himself clearly. His grandmother, Ms. Joann, was eager to enroll Nehemiah in a full-day preschool program where he could get the socialization he needed and healthy time away from his siblings.

Nehemiah's teachers began to notice his communication challenges. Teachers and other children struggled to understand Nehemiah's communication and requests, leading to frustration and tantrums causing Nehemiah to miss out on important parts of the school day.

Equipped with knowledge and training on early language acquisition, VOCEL's teaching team devised a plan to support Nehemiah's communication abilities. The team used various interventions including:

- Strategic meal-time seating near the most talkative children
- Extra 1-on-1 teacher conversation during open play and outdoor time
- Strategies for Ms. Joann and Nehemiah's family to use at home and on the go
- Partnership with Chicago Public Schools to begin speech therapy

As he became more comfortable in the classroom and the interventions took hold, Nehemiah and his communication skills blossomed. Now, in September 2016, Nehemiah is entering his third year with VOCEL. He is flourishing as a young leader and learner, and he converses constantly – always eager to have a conversation with a peer or teacher.

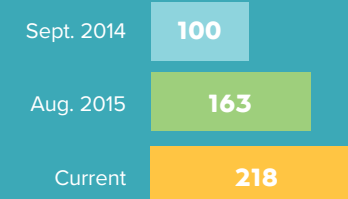
After two years of significant improvement in his speech and language skills, Nehemiah now acts as a "language builder" for others, constantly conversing with his peers.



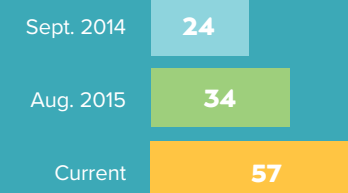
Growth: Expressive Communication

Children at VOCEL wear LENA™ Digital Language Processors weekly to track their expressive communication growth. The devices provide objective data demonstrating how much children are talking and conversing on an hourly basis.

Vocalizations per hour



Conversational turns per hour



The Freeman Story

When Ms. Freeman was first introduced to VOCEL in spring 2015, she knew she wanted her daughter in a preschool program, but was reluctant to send her baby to school. Jermyah, a petite frame with a booming personality, was born 9-weeks premature. Ms. Freeman wanted to make sure her tiny firecracker was truly ready to be away from home. After a few months of periodic conversations with VOCEL's teachers, Ms. Freeman was ready.

On Jermyah's first day of school, there was an instant connection between her and VOCEL Lead Teacher, Ruth Alexander. Ms. Ruth's nurturing demeanor welcomed Jermyah into VOCEL's environment and helped her acclimate to her new friends and new routine.

Ms. Ruth built a relationship with Ms. Freeman too, and noticed she was fixated on Jermyah knowing letters, colors and numbers before she went to kindergarten and frustrated that her 3-year-old hadn't mastered these skills yet. Ms. Ruth assured her that Jermyah was right on track, telling Ms. Freeman about social-emotional skills Jermyah was picking up at school and how those will matter in her future.

At a home visit the following school year, Ms. Ruth asked Ms. Freeman, "What are your goals for Jermyah this school year?" She replied "To be ready for kindergarten. But not like ABCs, 123s ready – I mean emotionally ready. I know that she'll learn all of that other stuff in kindergarten if she goes in ready to learn, able to follow directions, able to make friends and solve conflicts."

This is the impact of The VOCEL Way. It is creating relationships and connections where child, parent and teacher achieve together.

“The staff at VOCEL exceeds my expectation. I know when I bring my daughters to school they will be loved and nurtured and challenged to reach their greatest potential.”

— Ms. Anjel Freeman,
parent of Jermyah (4) and Harmony (3)

Jermyah and Harmony love spending their days at the VOCEL Preschool – painting, dancing, reading stories and engaging in pretend play, conversing with friends and teachers through it all.



Restaurant Adventure Who doesn't love Taco Tuesday? Imagine the joy when VOCEL's preschoolers created a Taco Tuesday restaurant for their families, complete with home-made guacamole. Who says entrepreneurship can't start young?

Board, Staff, Volunteers

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Executive Director, VOCEL
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- Ashley Pletz, MS.Ed., M.P.P.**
Early Childhood Education Consultant

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- Navid Rahgozar** Houlihan Lokey
- Matt Rubin** Discover Financial Services,
ReadAskChat Ltd.
- Cailie Ryan** Teach For America
- Kendall Shearer** Digital Kitchen
- Sarah Stevens** MSN Candidate, UIC
- Mary Yang** The Boston Consulting Group

Staff

- Kelly Lambrinatos** Executive Director,
Co-Founder
- Jesse Ilhardt** Director of Program & Evaluation,
Co-Founder
- Ruth Alexander** Preschool Lead Teacher &
Coach
- Jamie Huenink** Family Support Specialist
- Infiniti Starks** VCPA Family Attendant
- Allen Swilley** Development Manager
- Jamie Thomas** Director of Program &
Operations
- Kinya Willaby** VCPA Lead Teacher

Volunteers

- Christina Hachikian**
- Carolyn Laughlin**
- Sally Powers**
- Jane Reidy**
- Viki Rivkin**
- Annemarie Spitz**

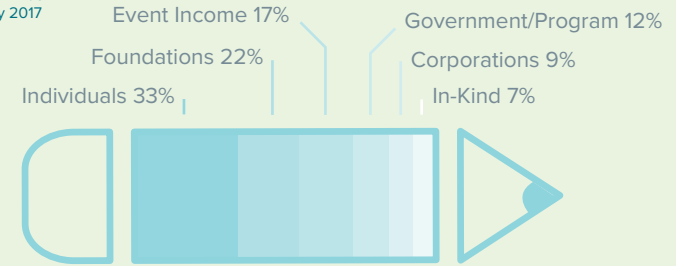
Community Adventure

VOCEL has become a part of the Austin community. In February of 2016, a group of VOCEL staff, parents, children and grandparents visited the local alderman to share the importance of VOCEL's work with our community's youngest citizens – its children.

Financials

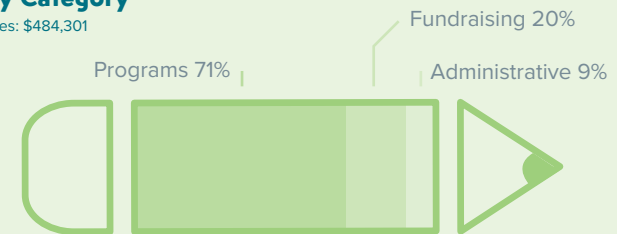
Revenue by Category*

*Audited financials will be available in January 2017



Expenses by Category*

*Total FY16 Expenses: \$484,301



VOCEL is eager to launch birth through age 5 programming in the dedicated early childhood education space at New Moms in 2017. The building, just 4 years old, includes a courtyard playspace for outdoor adventure.

A Moving Adventure

It has been quite a wild ride since VOCEL started as a mere idea in 2012. At some point, most adventures have poignant moments when you take a leap and stretch yourself beyond your initial vision. In 2017, VOCEL's adventure will continue with a leap forward into a new facility. In partnership with New Moms, Inc., VOCEL will relocate its services to 5317 West Chicago Ave, within the New Moms, Inc. Transformation Center. VOCEL is eager to embrace this new adventure and expand early learning services to reach nearly 50 children with full-day, year-round care and education. VOCEL's innovative Child Parent Academy (VCPA) will also relocate to the new facility, bringing all of VOCEL's programming under one roof with a great partner and pipeline of children and families to support. Let the adventure begin!

Grants and Donations

September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016

\$50,000+

Lincoln Park Preschool & Kindergarten

\$25,000- \$49,999

The Crown Family
Paul & Mary Finnegan
The Finnegan Family Foundation

\$10,000- \$24,999

Lindy Hirschsohn & Chris Coetzee
Anke Faber & Daniel Tierney
Paul Gearen
GEM Realty Capital
Michael & Lindy Keiser
Barbara Koren
Tom & Sally Powers
The John Buck Company Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

Larry & Char Damron
Houlihan Lokey
Ben & Jesse Ilhardt
Larry & Winnie Kearns
Latham & Watkins
Ellen Morgan & Sheldon Zenner
SVP Chicago
Teach For America Social Innovation Award

\$2,500-\$4,999

Charlie Osweiler
Andrew & Kathleen Turnbull

\$1,000-\$2,499

Mary Lou Burns
Amy Carbone
Kevin & Linda Conway
Lawrence & Caroline Eagles
Jonathon & Valencia Fellows
Fox, Swibel, Levin & Carroll LLP
The Fogelson Family Foundation
Brian Jansen & Jennie Funk
Edward & Linda Garrity
Ellen Goldrick
Good Heart Work Smart Foundation
Andrew & Ann Gore
Jordan & Debra Hadelman
Louis & Meredith Hellebusch

Scott & Nicole Jackson
Dana Keiser & Adam Levy
Arthur & Cecily Kaz
Jack & Becky Krasaeath
Judd & Linda Miner
The Miske Family Charitable Trust
New Prospect Foundation
Stephen & Linda Patton
Tom & Susan Pluss
Tom & Viki Rivkin
St. Paul's United Church of Christ
Wheeler Kearns Architects

\$500-\$999

Anan & Margi Abu Taleb
Jim & Bonnie Banahan
Gabe & Amy Cahill
John Gearen
Dan & Caroline Grossman
Adam & Christina Hachikian
Patti Henderson
Mary Ellen Hennessy
Kristen Kranias
Adaline Koren
Jerry & Kelly Lambrinatos
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Plymouth Rock Insurance
Ryan & Laura Sandahl
Maureen Shinnars-Gearen
Reid & Rebecca Snellenbarger
Sue Toth

\$250-\$499

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Brian & Elizabeth Farmer
Stephen & Juli Hellebusch
Frank Karl
Ellen Rosen
Laureen Schipisi
John Schmidt
Clare Spartz
Jeremy Stillings
The Van Grinsven Family

\$100-\$249

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Tony & Jean Barbato
Catherine Barnhart
Susan Barrett Kelly
Kathy Berghoff
Jenelle Chalmers

Kim Chen
Kathleen Dempsey Boyle
Doug & Sue DeRock
Todd Detmold
Jack Doppelt
Edward & Maureen Van Dorn
Anne Fisher
Stephanie Forton
Debbie Frisch
Jonathon & Rachael Fritz
John & Ann Gearen
Mark & Katie Hytros
Doug & Bonnie Ilhardt
Richard & Dorothy Ilhardt
Sandra Jenson
Ethan & Cathy Kahn
Shelby King
Tom Kuczmarksi
Carolyn Laughlin
Lisa Lebeck Allen
Elizabeth Lowe
Daniel Martino
Kathleen McQueeney
Micro Product Sales, Inc.
Monique Moore
Kristen Morpew
Amy Moy
Carrie Newton
Jane Nolan
Kristen O'Rourke
Rob & Molly Powers
Charles & Marilyn Rivkin
Vibeke Roesch
Susan Rusk
Elizabeth Schenkier
Jean Schlemmer
Sandra Seabolt-Pogge
Scott & Patti Swakow
Margaret Terry
Jessica Turner
Ruth Ann Watkins
Carol Waugh
Matthew Whittaker
Julie Zaideman
Jessica Zander

Up to \$99

Anneka Anand
Deborah Baker
Jordan Barnhill
Bill & Pam Beam
Megan Bock
Matt Bogue



VOCEL Co-Founder Jesse Ilhardt reads a classroom favorite to VOCEL's children.

Gifts In Kind

Bernie's Books
Andrew Falconer
Ken Gardstrom
Paul Gearen
Good Sports
Janeen Hayword, swellbeing
Nicole Jackson
Jill Tiongco Photography
Cecily Kaz
Barbara Koren
Jack Krasaeath
Amy Krause Rosenthal
Sally Powers
Nicole Pritchard
Jane Reidy
Roger Scommegna, Signal Ridge Vineyard
Tiia Norsym Photography
VSA Partners



Donor Adventure

In November 2015, VOCEL started a new tradition with our inaugural Early Expressions Luncheon. The second annual luncheon this past November celebrated the steadfast support VOCEL receives from its donors. We're already planning for the next Early Expressions adventure in 2017!



“VOCEL provides exemplary education and robust language development during the early years when children’s brains are most malleable, leading to incredible outcomes. Children leave VOCEL as emerging leaders, prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

— Jesse Ilhardt,
Director of Program
& Evaluation

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Chicago, IL 60622

Preschool Program
5058 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60644

VCPA & VOCEL Office
416 N. Laramie
Chicago, IL 60644

New Location Coming in 2017!
5317 W Chicago Ave.
Chicago, IL 60644

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redefining early education, child by child