



THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS @ CHICAGO'S  
CENTER FOR LITERACY

2019-2020  
ANNUAL REPORT



# Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

The year 2020 was eventful, to say the least, and tested everyone. Families struggled with the COVID-19 pandemic and personal loss. People grappled with a steep decline in global economic activity as lockdowns weakened employment, and children had to pivot from learning in the classroom to learning in their homes; overnight parents became teachers.

The murder of George Floyd and countless other Black and Brown women and men strengthened the Center for Literacy's (CFL) commitment to being part of the movement to end systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism through our work. We could define it as the year of evolution towards a stronger organizational identity. Our organization showed tremendous resilience, responsibility, and resolve to support and serve one another, our participants, our communities, and our patrons.

We are pleased to share our 2020 annual report with you. As a literacy organization, dedicated to serving Chicago's under-resourced South, Southwest, and West side neighborhoods, we develop research-based programming to respond to the learning needs of culturally diverse families. This annual report celebrates our 2020 successes, while also planning next steps to address challenges and develop a continuous quality improvement plan to assure success in 2021. Together with the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services, we look forward to continuing our support of Chicago Early Learning families.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Kira Baker-Doyle*





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**MEENOO RAMI**  
Author of Thrive, Senior Program Manager, Industry Engineering, Microsoft

# OUR MISSION

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...is to promote educational equity and community-based social capital through multigenerational literacy programming, research, and partnerships.



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The history of the Center for Literacy (CFL) through the years, from its inception in 1991 to present.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you and acknowledgement of CFL donors, volunteers, and sponsors.

# OUR HISTORY

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In 1991, Family Start Learning Centers (FAST) implemented services to Head Start families via The Chicago Public Library Literacy Initiative, which developed family literacy service centers in eight public housing reading and study centers that were first floor apartments that were converted into library spaces.

To the surprise of many, parents and children filled the centers to hear stories read, participate in poetry workshops, attend adult literacy classes, receive help with children's homework, and learn basic computer literacy skill.

The Assistant Director of Children's Services, which was then managed by the Chicago Department of Human Services, decided to review the program and they were pleased with their findings. Their review found that families received a great deal of attention, and the staff had a high commitment to the facilitation of intergenerational learning. Families were eager to participate in the program and many families attended on a daily basis.

Subsequently, the Chicago Public Library Literacy Initiative staff was asked to develop a pilot program that provided family literacy services to Head Start families. Head Start programs were designed to give children an educational head start, and parents were taught techniques to support their children's literacy, while developing their own literacy skills. Out of this pilot program the Family Start Learning Center was born, **FA** for Family and **ST** for Start, which became known by the acronym "FAST".

FAST began by serving 60 families the first year. Much of the staff's time was spent learning about Head Start, surveying delegate agencies, and acquainting themselves with the culture and unique needs of the families being served within the Head Start community.

Each year the FAST program offerings improved, and in 1996, the University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for Literacy (CFL) was asked to manage the program. Immediate refinements included grouping parents according to their skill level, adding additional instructors trained in early childhood education and/or adult education, implementing research-based family literacy training for parents, and upgrading assessments, case management and data collection systems.

The City of Chicago's Office Early Child Care and Education Plan, in conjunction with the Mayor's Office, supported the duplication of FAST services. So, UIC's Center for Literacy created three additional Family Start Learning Centers - one on the Southside and two, new, centers to support Latinx and Hispanic families enrolled in Head Start programs. The outcome goals were to improve the literacy skills of parents while supporting their personal education goals, as well as improve the early literacy skills of their children.

Since its inception, FAST, with the guidance of UIC's Center for Literacy, has grown to support seven additional programs that focus on improving, supporting, educating, training, and researching various aspects of family literacy. In addition, FAST has continued operating its family literacy sites and growing its community-relations through its family literacy outreach programs and events. FAST's family literacy workshops are facilitated citywide and are based upon University of Illinois at Chicago's Center for Literacy's nationally recognized family literacy program entitled, *"Family Literacy Aprendiendo Mejorando Educando"* (FLAME).

The Center for Literacy, and FAST, are known for being rooted in the communities they serve; many staff are former volunteers and/or participants in the program or live in the communities that they serve. Furthermore, CFL is recognized as a distinguished center for research application and evaluation and has published numerous scholarly works that have been translated into practical community applications.



# OUR PRINCIPLES

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We seek to be self-aware and in constant reflection about who we are and what we do. In order to achieve our mission, we believe that we must all work to understand our personal identities and biases in efforts to be culturally responsive and rooted in place.

With this assumption in mind:

- We **embrace** participants so they can feel safe, comfortable, and courageous as they bring their evolving, intersectional identities to our co-created learning environments;
- We **empower** participants to confidently explore new ways of understanding and reimagining our shared world;
- We **create** bridges to connect communities and open opportunities for cross-generational collaboration; and
- We **are** people, educators, practitioners, and community members who practice humility and self-care so that we may be responsive to the needs and goals of the communities in which we work.

# OUR VISION

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CFL will be a national innovator and leader in efforts to design and model culturally sustaining multigenerational literacy education practices that promote equity in our increasingly digitally connected world.

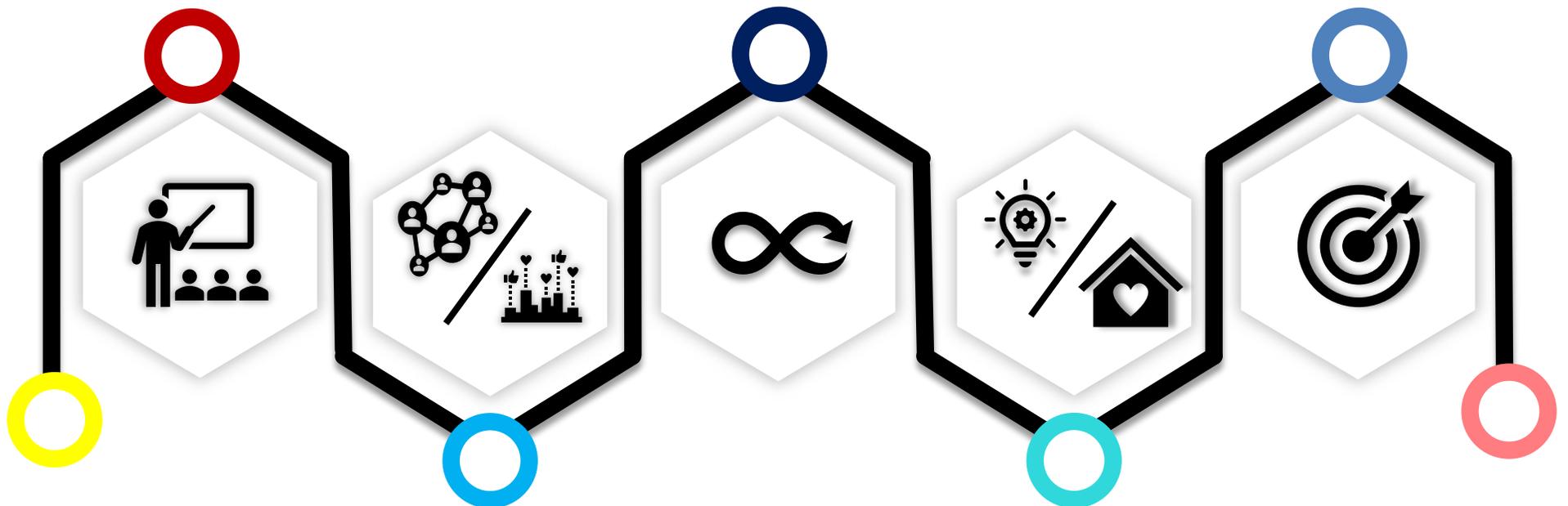
To achieve this Vision, CFL will:

- Leverage new modes of learning and connected technologies to support multigenerational learning, community-based social capital, and access to resources and opportunities.
- Cultivate community partnerships that help to build 21st century educational opportunity pathways for families and youth.
- Convene scholars at local and national levels to research and discover literacies of the connected world and build research-based resources to support equity in multigenerational learning.

# OUR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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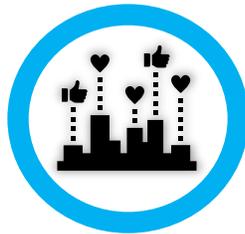
Using a strengths-based approach, we **build** learning communities that tap into and expand our collective creativity. Our learning environments are organized with intentionality to **support** positive personal and professional growth. We work with individuals, families, and communities to **advocate** for the goals and issues that are important to their lives and well-being, drawing on community resources to build power at every level.





Adapting and designing dynamic & intentional learning environments.

Co-creating reciprocal learning relationships.

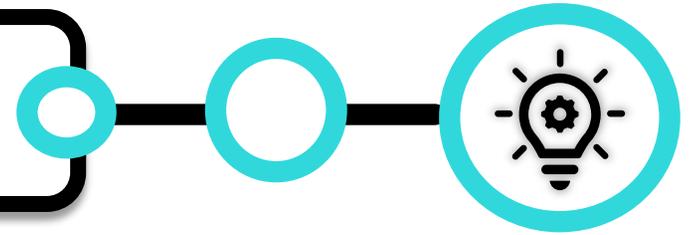


Mobilizing shared literacy experiences to build transformative communities.

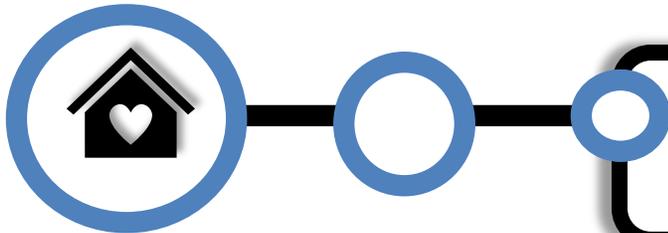
Engaging continuously in reflective practice.



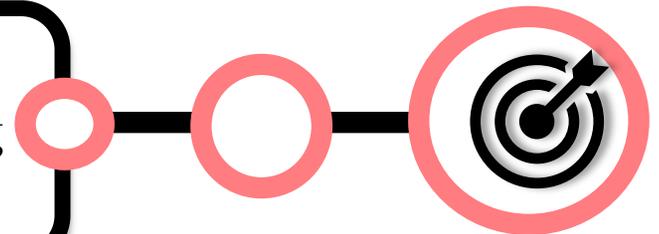
Acknowledging & honoring participants' knowledge and experiences.



Embracing & supporting family as the foundation of learning.



Being a resource to equip individuals to accomplish personal goals & identify as life-long learners.



This community-oriented approach ~ **working in relationship with, rather than in relationship to, our participants and their communities** ~ serves as a compass that guides us in a continual process of evaluating our work in order to keep it authentic and relevant to the rich diversity of Chicago's residents.

# OUR 2020 IMPACT

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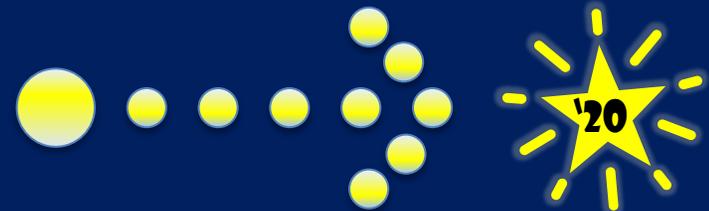
Adult Education & Career Transitions (AECT)

Parent & Youth Outreach (PYO)

Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays (RCADD)

Social Service Department (SSD)

Community Engagement (ENGAGE)



## **AECT** Adult Education & Career Transitions

In the **Adult Education and Career Transition (AECT)** program, we provide free classes and tutoring to parents interested in continuing their basic education, learning English, or obtaining their high school equivalency. We also support parents in making successful transitions to college programs, employment, and training opportunities. We strive to promote children's success in school in part by helping parents achieve their educational and economic goals.

**Parent & Youth Outreach (PYO)** provides workshops and special events designed to engage parents at their child's Chicago Early Learning site. The workshops are comprised of research-based self-enhancement activities that are focused on financial management, preemployment planning, and family literacy. In addition, our family literacy programs introduce home literacy activities that support children's early cognitive development and positive emotional growth. The male involvement division of Parent & Youth Outreach program oversees the Dad's Reading Daily (DRD) workshops which provide specific support and encourages dads to be involved in their children's education. Throughout the year, parents and children are invited to special events hosted by the Parent & Youth Outreach program.

## **PYO** Parent & Youth Outreach

## **RCADD** Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays

The **Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays (RCADD)** provides a rich collection of resources, trainings, referrals, and consultations by educational specialists to those who care for, teach, and serve children with an autism spectrum disorder or other developmental delays. These services are designed to support Chicago Early Learning staff and families as they address the needs of children with autism and other developmental delays. Trainings focus on understanding autism and the spectrum of developmental delays as well as strategies to effectively advocate for children with special needs. Parents and staff are introduced to visual supports and learning aids to use at home and in the classroom. RCADD staff also manage a lending library that includes books for parents and children, informational handouts, educational DVDs, computer software, and adapted toys and games, all available at no cost to the Chicago Early Learning community.

The **Social Service Department (SSD)** which is comprised of Transitional Services, Case Management, and Parent Resource is a holistically designed support system which focuses on Chicago Early Learning's Family Service Workers (FSWs) and Chicago Early Learning (CEL) families. For CEL families, the department provides professional development opportunities in the form of evidence-based communities of practice. In addition, the Parent Resource program helps to promote engagement and involvement by providing ongoing trainings, professional development, and technical support to FSWs working at Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) funded sites. The Social Service Department facilitates site-based Learning Circles, technical support, and citywide trainings. These trainings are intended to provide professional development, knowledge, skills, and support to FSWs, so they can effectively support parents in achieving their personal, family, and community goals.

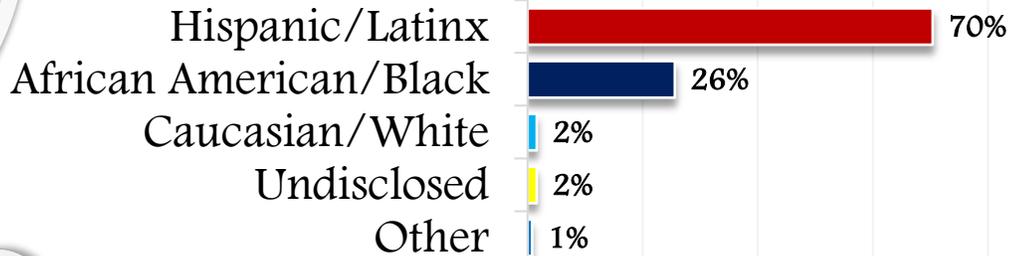
## **SSD** Social Service Department

## **ENGAGE** Community Engagement

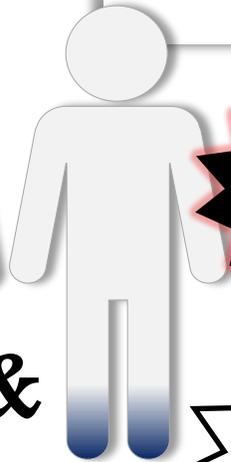
The **Community Engagement Department (ENGAGE)** provides short-term & long-term volunteer opportunities, which allows participants to get involved with Center for Literacy service projects. There are three facets of the Community Engagement department in which a person can participate, or a community-based organization can develop and enhance their current volunteer program. In the AmeriCorps program, volunteers ("Members") support Chicago Early Learning families and receive hands-on training to support adult education classes, provide financial literacy and work readiness workshops, and offer volunteer management support to organizations. The CFL Volunteers program offers short-term and long-term volunteer opportunities to help support our families through tutoring, mentoring, or providing office support. The Volunteer Resource program offers volunteer management workshops, individualized training support, and cultivates peer-to-peer learning spaces that assist in developing or enhancing an organization's current volunteer program.

# AECT

Adult Education & Career Transitions



&



17%  
Male

82%  
Female

1%  
Undisclosed



**AVERAGE AGE**

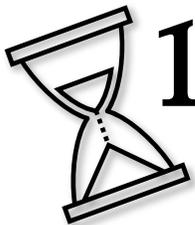
**38**

**{ 201 }**

Parents participated in CFL's High School Equivalency (HSE) courses.

**{ 37 }**

Parents engaged with CFL's Adult Education services prior to enrollment.



**1,876.90**

**INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS**



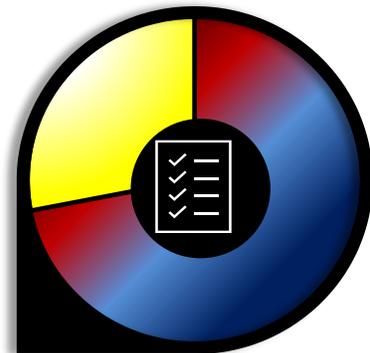
**HSE PASS RATE**



**79%**

**72%**

**CLASS  
COMPLETION RATE**



**VISIT US** @ <https://cfl.uic.edu/cfl-overview/adult-education-and-career-transition/>

# PYO

Parent & Youth Outreach



{ 741 }



**NEW** parents attended in-person and virtual workshops on topics covering family literacy, employment readiness, and financial literacy.

English Workshops

59%

Spanish Workshops

41%



**FLIP**  
30%



**PEER**  
25%

**DRD**  
5%

**FLAME**  
40%

41%  
Hispanic/Latinx

35%  
African American/Black

20%  
Undisclosed

2%  
Other

2%  
Caucasian/White

85

Chicago Early Learning sites receiving workshops.

{ 130 }

Teens **HIRED** for the CFL Summer Teen Program.

99%

=

FLIP & PEER participants that gained skills that will **SUPPORT** and **IMPROVE** their family's well-being.

104

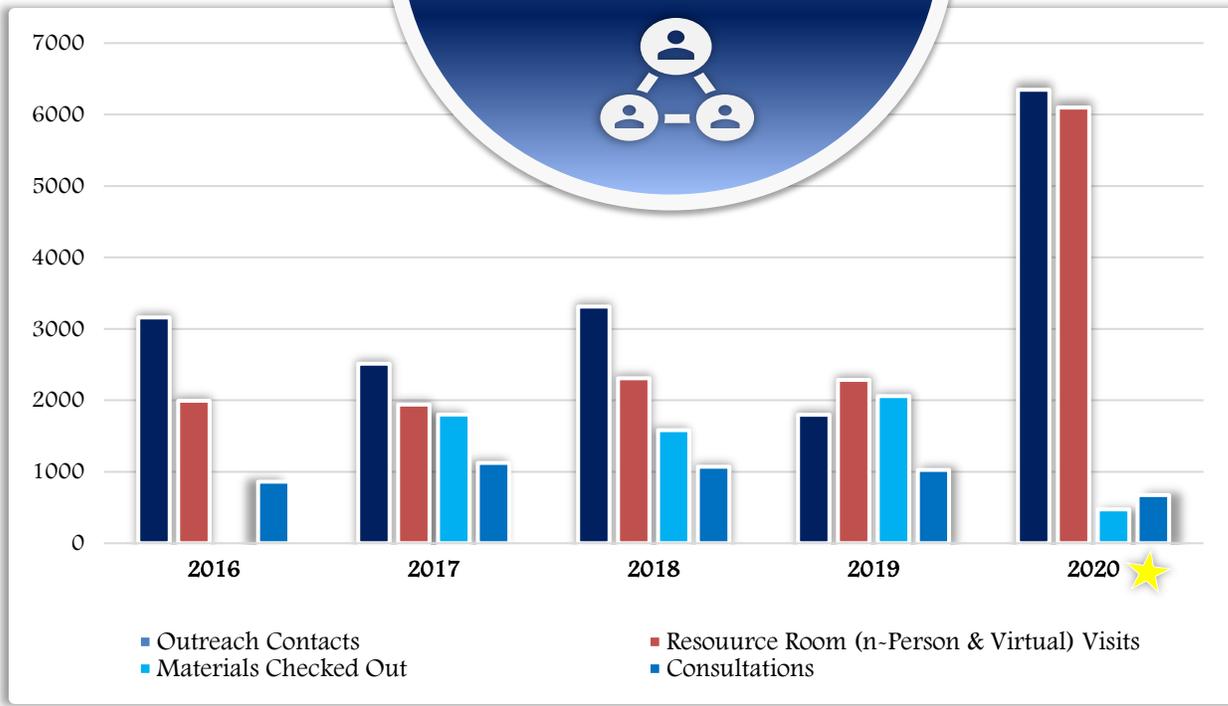
Men participated in workshops centered around the

**IMPORTANCE OF MALE INVOLVEMENT IN A CHILD'S LIFE.**

**VISIT US** @ <https://cfl.uic.edu/cfl-overview/pyo/>

# RCADD

Resource Center for  
Autism & Developmental  
Delays

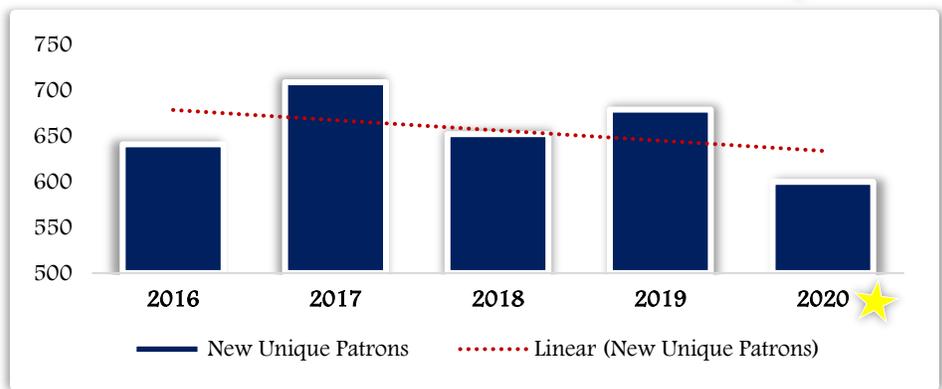


**89%**

Training participants that demonstrated an increased content knowledge after attending an RCADD training.



## RCADD Trainings



RCADD Training Participants **1334**

**82%**

Ranked the RCADD facility and staff as meeting their needs.

**99%**

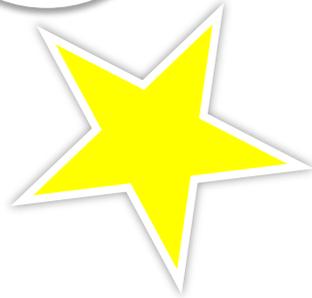
Felt that RCADD trainings **MET** their **EXPECTATIONS.**

- RCADD
- 2<sup>nd</sup>
- 3<sup>rd</sup>

**VISIT US** @ <https://cfl.uic.edu/cfl-overview/rcadd/>

# SSD

Social Service Department



# FEPLN



**123**

**NEW** Community of Practice (CoP) Participants.

**41**

Professional Development Sessions



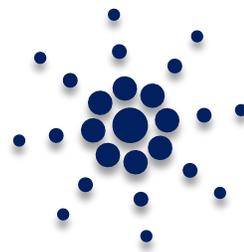
## CASE MANAGEMENT & TRANSITIONAL SERVICES

**12**

**NEW** Community of Practice (CoP) Adult Education & Career Transitions participants.

**{ 27 }**

**NEW** Life Skills Workshops



**280**

**TRAINING PARTICIPANTS**

**37**



Chicago Early Learning Sites receiving **SITE-BASED** technical assistance.

**35**

**LIFE SKILLS PARTICIPANTS**

**2025** = **OUTREACH PARTICIPANTS**

**309**

Community of Practice (CoP) participants progressing on their professional goals.

**100%**

Adult Education & Career Transitions participants receiving Case Management or Transitional Services.

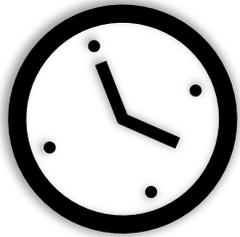
**86%**

Adult Education & Career Transitions participants **ACHIEVING** one or more career transition goal.

**VISIT US** @ <https://cfl.uic.edu/overview/service/>

# ENGAGE

Community Engagement



**15,002**  
AmeriCorps Project  
MORE Service  
Hours Completed

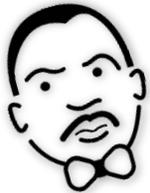
**16** = AmeriCorps members that  
**COMPLETED** the service year.

**1,710**

Individual service hours  
**COMPLETED** by **10** Project  
MORE AmeriCorps members.

**2020**  
**PROJECT MORE**  
**EVENTS**

**\$600+** **DONATION VALUE**



= Project MORE hosted its **18TH ANNUAL MLK DONATION DRIVE & DAY OF SERVICE** in January 2020 where AC members, UIC staff, and community volunteers hosted a **POP-UP LITERACY FAIR** at the DuSable Museum of African American History and homeless shelters throughout Chicago.

**{300}** **CHILDREN**  
Engaged

**{150}** **PARENTS**  
Engaged



= In November of 2020 AmeriCorps members delivered care packages to **HOPE MANOR**, a veteran housing facility located on Chicago's west side

**{81}** **VETERANS**  
Served

**\$1200+**  
**DONATION VALUE**

**48**

**VOLUNTEER RESOURCE PARTICIPANTS**  
representing **31** non-  
profits & CBOs.

**11**

Non-profits & CBOs implementing **3+** new tools learned in the Volunteer Resource Program (VRP) trainings.

**VISIT US** @ <https://cfl.uic.edu/engage/>

# TESTIMONIALS & SUCCESS STORIES

Amazing work, very prompt [when] answering emails and collaborating with me to find the perfect materials for my students to learn and continue growing. I can't wait to come back for more.

~ **RCADD** Patron

Always helpful! Resources are well maintained, a great source of information.

~ **RCADD** Patron



I just wanted to say **THANK YOU!**

The interactive resources and PowerPoints you all have been uploading onto your RCAAD site have been lifesaving (especially on Monday's when I feel like I'm starting all over again) and absolutely on point for us educators that are continually trying to create new and engaging academic content for our students. I have always been a major fan [of] RCAAD especially the resource library and task boxes.

I wanted to be sure to send an email to say **THANK YOU** and let you all know that [your] work is **APPRECIATED** and many of us are utilizing these resources. I have been **SHARING** the RCAAD website and resources with parents, students, and staff to ensure that the [programs] at RCAAD [continue]!

Have an awesome day! You all are **AMAZING!!!**

~ **M. E.**, Occupational Therapist & **RCADD** Patron

## FEPLN SUCCESS STORY Building a Network of Support



This year, Family Engagement Professional Network (FEPLN) wrapped up the Family Service Worker (FSW) Learning Circles. This group of FSWs served in their role for five years or less. The focus of the learning circle is to help participants deepen their practice in their role as a family service worker, learn from their peers and build a network of support.

During their time together in each session, the participants in this Foundational FSW Learning Circle found meaningful ways to lean in and support one another. In each session, the FEPLN facilitation team could see their bonds were growing beyond the space of the Learning Circle time. At the end of the last session, the group decided to continue meeting and stay connected. On the post survey one participant noted, "thank you for expanding my circle of support. I am not alone in my role". The commitment to stay connected and build new bridges of support is one of the key outcomes for FEPLN. Having a sense of connection and support helps to mitigate workplace factors of burnout.



## CASE MANAGEMENT Success Story

Case Management Participant #1 is an excellent student who began the program after I had already completed my internship. When I met this student, she/he was one of the friendliest students I have ever met. Similar to all of the students we serve, it is sometimes hard to express vulnerability, share experiences and life stories. This individual has attended almost every one of the Case Management workshops and has shown growth each time. She/He is very insightful, kind and inspirational and it has been a pleasure working with her/him.

**A.A.**, CFL Case Manager (2020)

# TESTIMONIALS & SUCCESS STORIES

(cont'd)

## CAREER TRANSITIONS

### Success Story

Transitional Student #1 began their journey with FAST Southwest as an ESL student in 2018. The student instantly felt at home and the support not only from their instructors but from their peers too. “It was a very welcoming space, I felt comfortable right away, and could feel the support from everyone in the program”, student’s statement. While taking ESL classes, they learned that FAST SW also offered HSE classes. The student went back and forth on the decision to enroll, after giving it some thought and talking it over with their partner who always encouraged them to continue studying, so they decided to make the jump. The student told themselves, “if I was able to complete courses in my hometown (Mexico), why shouldn’t I be able to do it here?” At first, they felt a bit overwhelmed with double the classes, taking care of their children, and daily house responsibilities. The student began to doubt themselves and their abilities and would often tell themselves, “I’ll never get my HSE, I should just drop the classes.” However, they found a big source of inspiration and motivation from a student also taking HSE classes. A student who they say, “was a mother of two and her youngest has a disability that requires a lot of her time, she has no support from her family, and still finds the motivation to continue the course and eventually graduated! I find this incredibly inspiring and was a big part in my own journey to obtaining my HSE.” With that in mind and the support of their instructors, the student eventually transitioned into a full time HSE student.

As they began to get ready to take the HSE exams, they couldn’t believe all the support and resources they were receiving from staff, instructors, and the social services department. “This was a really challenging time for me. I had my two kids and I had started working. My work schedule conflicted with my school schedule, but the instructor always [tried] to work with me whenever I could attend and send me anything I had missed. I began to utilize the wrap around services, case management and transitions, and felt that I really had a whole community not only supporting me but sharing in my dream of obtaining my HSE.” Before the student knew it, they were getting ready to take their first official exam. “I took my first exam and unfortunately did not pass it. I felt devastated and a bit discouraged.” However, with their support system behind them and some extra study time with their instructor, the student retook the test in 8 days and passed! The student slowly began to pass each test and with each pass they felt celebrated and supported by the FAST Southwest program. The student obtained their HSE and graduated in FY2019-2020. The student knew this was just the beginning and had no plans on slowing down.

With the continued support of their transition coach post-graduation, the student decided to apply to the AmeriCorps Project MORE program. The student once again had their support system with them and felt empowered throughout the rigorous application process. The student was accepted into the program in September 2020. “There are no words to ever describe how grateful I feel to have found FAST Southwest. I’m grateful to everyone who believed in me and never gave up on me, who challenged me, and motivated me when I wasn’t able to motivate myself. FAST Southwest has opened so many opportunities to me and my family, I’ve seen so much growth in myself and have done things I never dreamed possible. I cherish those experiences so much and there are so many moments that fill my heart with love and joy. I have found friends, resources, and community in this program, but best of all I have made FAST Southwest part of my family.”

**C.H.**, CFL Transitional Counselor (2020)

## ADULT EDUCATION (BILINGUAL LITERACY)

### Success Story

In early 2020, UIC Center for Literacy’s Family Start program participated in a community craft workshop series, called “**EL REGALO**” (The Gift) designed to highlight the gifts of language, culture, and community shared between parents and children. The workshop series arose from a partnership between the UIC Center for Literacy and MECA: Movimiento para la Educación Cultural y Autónoma (Movement for Cultural and Autonomous Education) and a desire to provide intentional family programming that honored participants’ language, culture, and ancestral knowledge.

In English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQZfk5BXE24>

En Español: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mb2KMFZvxVE&t=2s>



# TESTIMONIALS & SUCCESS STORIES

(cont'd)

## LEARNER SPOTLIGHT ~ Doralis Morales

Doralis Morales is the mother of two children ages 5 and 6. Both are attending Chicago Early Learning programs through Head Start and Chicago Public Schools. When Doralis enrolled her oldest daughter into the St. Joseph's Early Childhood Center Head Start in the Back of the Yards neighborhood, she learned about the Family Start (FAST) program.

She immediately enrolled in the FAST English as a Second Language program located upstairs from her child's classroom. Having arrived in the U.S. from Mexico only a few years prior, Doralis wanted to better understand the education system her daughter was entering and carve a better life for her and her family. In ESL classes, she learned about the FAST GED/High School Equivalency (HSE) program and set her sights on a new goal.

Despite support at home, Doralis suffered from....[read full story here!](#)



## LEARNER SPOTLIGHT ~ Lizmary Ayala

Lizmary Ayala is a FAST West High School Equivalency (HSE) student who enrolled in March of 2020 and passed the HiSET exam in December 2020. She had a plan when she enrolled and was determined to graduate before her birthday at the end of December. Not only did Lizmary pass her HiSET examination within this timeframe, but she was also working on her Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Certification at the same time.

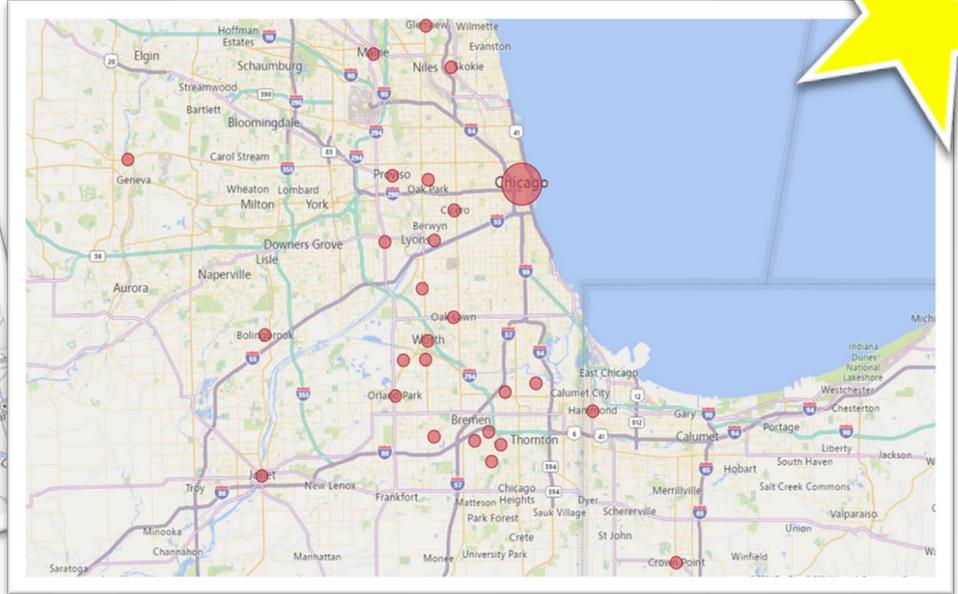
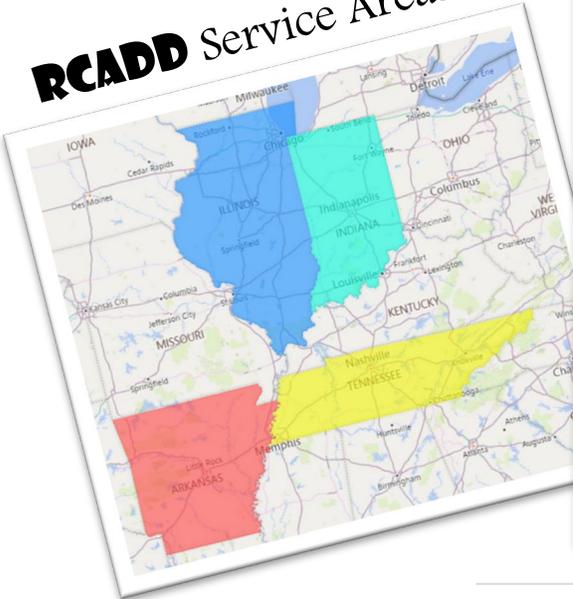
In addition to juggling responsibilities for her HiSET and EMT, she also balanced family responsibilities and other obstacles to remain steadfast to reach her goals. She took care of several of her children while she studied. In addition, she had to study for her HiSET exam remotely during the pandemic, which posed a technical challenge that she overcame. After she passed the HiSET Practice tests for Reading, Writing, Science, and Math, she had to schedule the official exam. While she passed her first test remotely, at home, she had to reschedule her second test because the HiSET Test Monitor said there was too much background noise in her home. Consequently, she had to complete an in-person test at a testing site during the pandemic. These tests were scarce, so she had to take the test on the date and place that was available. Finally, she had to be the caretaker of two family members who came down with COVID-19. As each obstacle arose, Lizmary confronted it with a positive and calm attitude. She did not let any of these roadblocks deter her from reaching her goals before her birthday. We are so proud of Lizmary and want to thank the staff and instructors who supported her in reaching her goals!



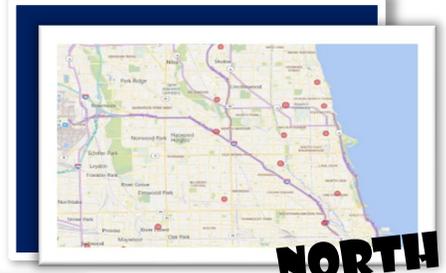
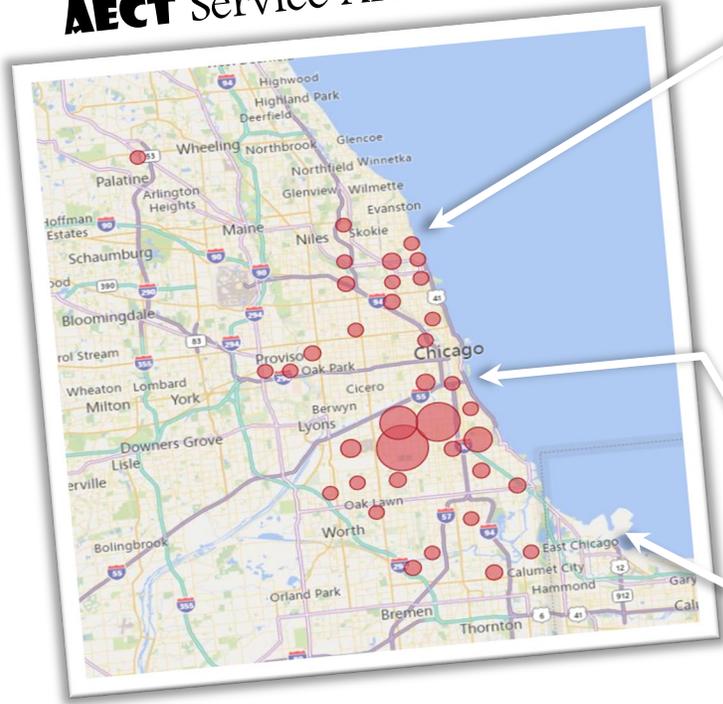
# CFL SERVICE AREAS



**RCADD Service Areas**



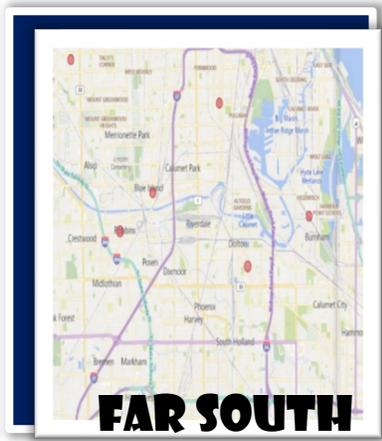
**AECT Service Areas**



**NORTH**



**SOUTH**



**FAR SOUTH**



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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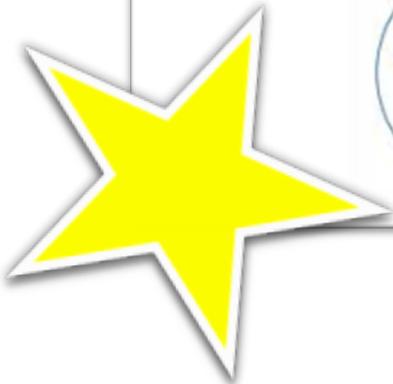
Thank you for your generosity to the Center for Literacy. We are thrilled to have your support. Through your donation we have been able to continue working towards designing and modeling culturally sustaining multigenerational literacy programs.

**YOU** truly make the difference for us, and we are extremely grateful!

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# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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The University of Illinois @ Chicago's  
Center for Literacy

## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by

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*Program Evaluation Coordinator*  
Center for Literacy

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**DELIVERED:** August 2021

The following report is a summative of the Center for Literacy fiscal year 2020 (December 1, 2019 to November 30, 2020) services. The report was prepared and written by Chivon Multrie (Author) and Diana Rios-Ibarra (Co-Author).

Technical assistance and guidance were provided by Ruby Camacho, Associate Director and Andrea Vaughan, Assistant Director of Literacy Research, UIC Center for Literacy.

Information included in the report covers the program's promised deliverables for the City of Chicago, Department of Family Support Services (DFSS) scope, internal evaluation completed in 2020, and a summary of programmatic impact.

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