



# 2022 ANNUAL GRATITUDE REPORT



# Letter from the CEO



Dear Friend -

Thank you for perusing our 2022 Gratitude Report. As the name implies, it is only because of our generous donors, volunteers, and community partners that EarlystART can prepare Little Learners for bright futures.

You'll see the positive results of our work sprinkled throughout this publication. What you may not see, however, is the incredible upheaval - arguably a crisis - happening in early childhood education.

For veteran organizations like EarlystART, we know full-well the issues that have long held back the field: low pay, fragmentation in the system, and diminishing public investment that leaves families holding the bill for high-quality care and education.



**Let's keep imagining a better future for early education...  
then boldly pursue it together!**

Continued on the next page

# Letter from the CEO



**At EarlystART, we're on a mission to not only imagine a brighter future, but to boldly pursue it with all we've got!**

It's the spirit behind startingEARLY, an initiative to increase the professionalism and capacity of the early childhood workforce. More than a means to removing barriers that have historically marginalized the early learning sector, it's an actionable plan to create real change.

Better wages. Better educator retention. Better outcomes that support a vibrant community and future workforce.

Over the coming months you'll be hearing more about startingEARLY, and our quest to create a more effective and efficient early learning environment – a system that provides the care and education that our children deserve.

As we go about this transformational work, know that your support and advocacy mean more than you can ever imagine!

Thank you for all you do to support EarlystART.

A handwritten signature in white ink, reading 'Deidre Anderson', is written over a thin white horizontal line.

Deidre Anderson, CEO

# Board Update: A Message from Theodis

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I'm pleased to share that 2022 was a wonder-filled year of building bridges, inspiring minds, and impacting futures at EarlystART.

Since joining the Board seven years ago, EarlystART has grown from a \$1 million organization to a nearly \$8 million dollar enterprise. That makes for a lot of wonder-filled moments among the classrooms of our three early learning centers!

With the most recent expansion happening on the heels of the pandemic in the fall of 2020, we've learned that the world can change without warning and that resilience and innovation are oh-so essential.

**It is why 2022 can also be described as a year of resetting and rebuilding.**



With organizational growth and COVID-19 recovery at play, our Board continues to re-tool our strategic plan with greater intentionality. We leaned into our governance practices and empowered new voices at the table. Through it all, one thing remained abundantly clear: without high-quality educators, we will compromise the futures of our most valuable asset - our children.

Continued on the next page

# Board Update: A Message from Theodis



Amid our nation's crisis to retain early childhood educators, we ask, "How can we incentivize this vitally essential work?" Or more plainly, "How do we pay our teachers a livable wage and find a way to fund it?"

The Board at EarlystART responded unanimously:

- Increasing starting pay of educators to \$15/hour, regardless of position – a rate that surpasses Missouri's average starting wage of \$12.50/hour;
- Committing to increase our advocacy efforts at both the state and regional levels for continued improvement to wages, benefits, and professional development.

Our work is far from done, but if we have learned anything in recent years, it is that we can emerge from the seemingly impossible when we unite for good.

We are grateful for the kindness and generosity of our community. Your continued investment in early childhood education and an equitably-compensated workforce will return immeasurable dividends – not the least of which is the wonder that inspires the best in each of us!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodis Watson', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

**Theodis Watson, President**

**Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.**

# Board of Directors Members

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Theodis Watson, President – CrossFirst Bank

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Heartland Presbytery Representative

Todd Navrat, Director – J.E. Dunn  
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Rebecca James, Vice President – Abovo

Matthew Oates, Director – Burns & McDonnell

Phyllis Hardwick, Secretary/Treasurer –  
Community Capital Fund

Ruth Stricklen Pullins, Director – University  
Health

Deidre Anderson, CEO, Ex-Officio – EarlystART

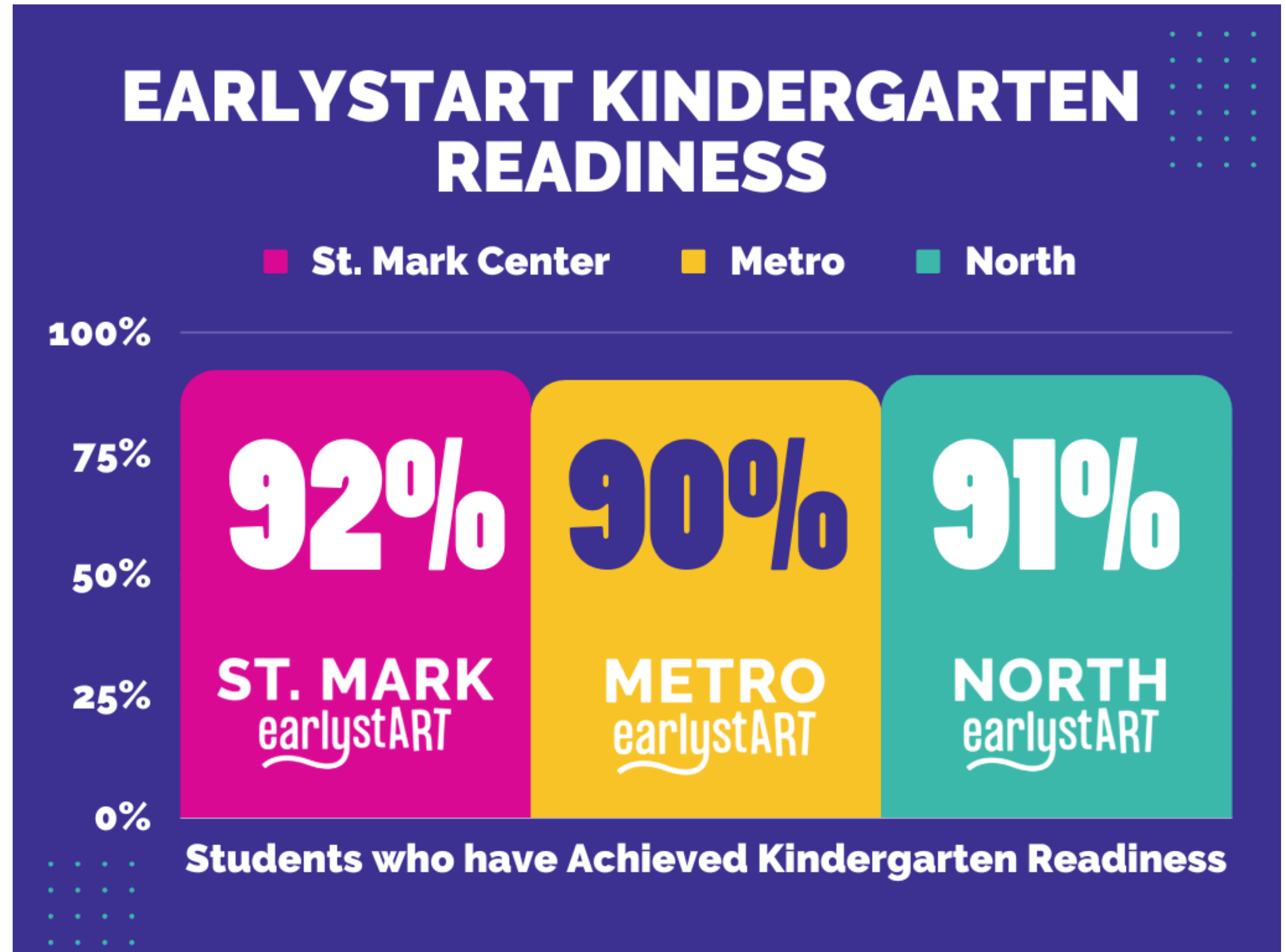
Cydney Ricker, Director – Kansas City Chiefs

Tom Eatman, Director – Builders by Design,  
LLC

Joni Wickham, Director – Wickham James  
Strategies & Solutions

# Impact

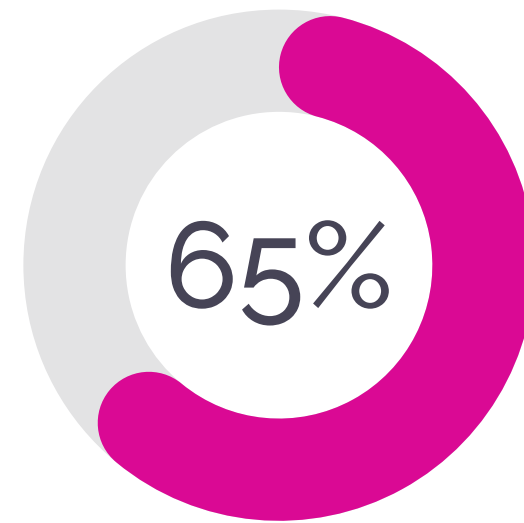
Over 90% of EarlystART Pre-K students achieve Missouri kindergarten-readiness benchmarks, a rate that far exceeds the readiness rate (about 30%) for all children in our city.



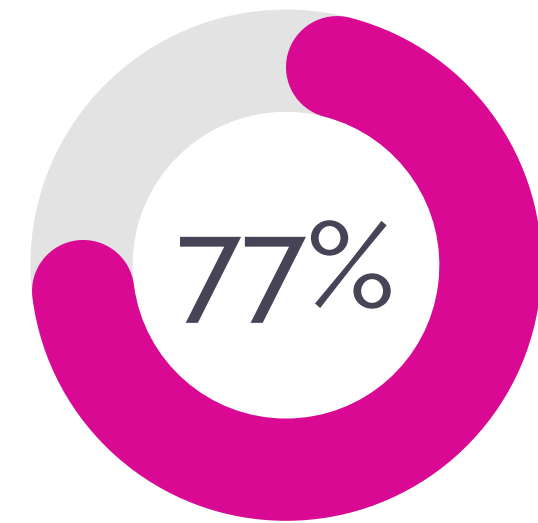
# Commitment to Diversity

Here, we believe we are shaping the world as we dream it to be: diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

Developed by a collective community voice, EarlystART has long been rooted in the belief that every child has the ability to succeed in school and in life. Ending injustice, racism, and bias is fundamental to delivering on this promise.



65% of EarlystART faculty and staff identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), reflecting diversity of the communities we serve.



77% of EarlystART children and families identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC).



# Commitment to Diversity

Families see themselves reflected in classroom language, multicultural literature, toys, and curriculum, and their identities mirrored in staff and other parents.

Opportunities for meaningful inclusion and diversity are embraced. From celebrating Black History Month and Pride Month to marching in the Juneteenth Parade, EarlystART offers opportunities for students and families to grow in awareness and connection.

We promise a welcoming environment to all and are committed to an ongoing celebration of diversity.



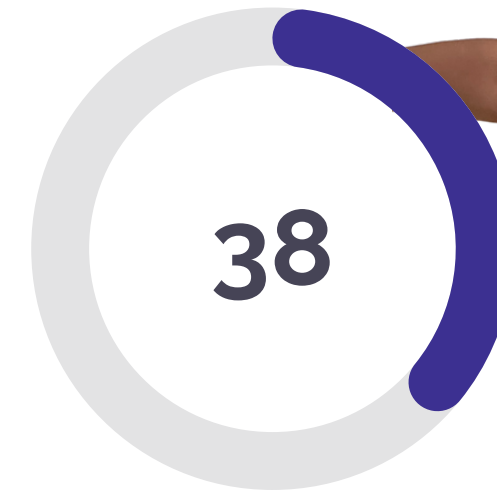
# EarllystART: By the Numbers



EarllystART kindergarten-readiness rate



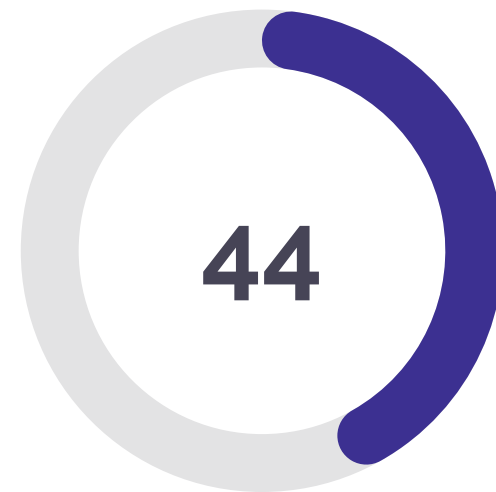
Pre-K students entering kindergarten



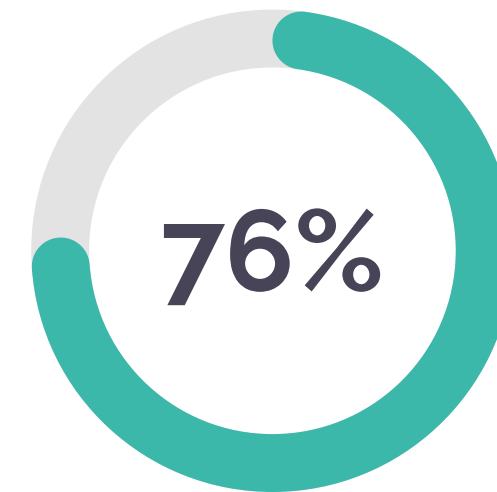
Family engagement events held



Parents & caregivers supported by Family Advocate



Students benefitting from Bobbye Jean Fuller Early Education Fund



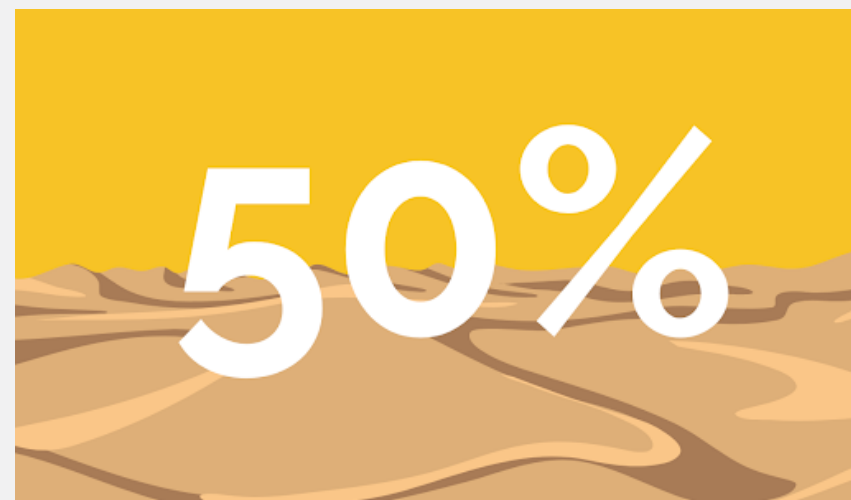
Students qualifying for Head Start/Early Head Start



# Economic Impact of Early Education



Missouri's lack of access to high-quality early childhood care, education, and services contributes to significant challenges for children, families, and the economy.



**50% of all children live in a child care dessert**



**2 out of 3 fourth-graders are reading below grade level**

**\$1.35 Billion**

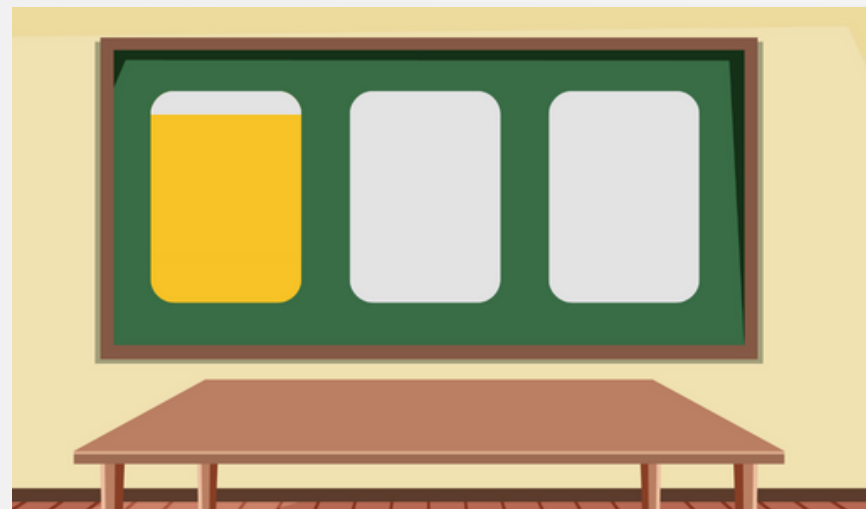
...that's with a B !!!

**Missouri is losing \$1.35 billion per year due to child care issues**

# Economic Impact in Kansas City



EarllystART works to ensure every family reaches its potential and that no child is turned away due to the cost of quality.



**Less than 1/3 of children have access to high-quality early education**



**Costs are \$10,000 to \$16,000 per year per child**



**Median households must spend nearly 20% of total income for a single child**

# Investing in Bright Futures

Research shows that childhood programs can yield a \$4-\$9 return per \$1 invested. The benefits are in the form of reduced costs for special education, social programs, and crime (The National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs).

**This means that a gift of \$5,000  
returns \$20,000-\$45,000 in  
societal benefits for our local  
economy!**



# There's No Place Like Home



"I came back to EarlystART because early childhood education is at a tipping point and Kansas Citians need to come together for our youngest citizens. When you give to EarlystART, you are nurturing what makes each child inherently special. EarlystART kids stand out as confident, curious, and friendly because of your generosity."

**Alex Basalo**

EarlystART Fund Development Manager



"Working with children reminds me how amazing and exciting life can be. Children motivate me to be a better person. St. Mark Center feels like home. Belonging and being appreciated are among my reasons for being here."

**Silvia Zavala**

EarlystART Teacher

# There's No Place Like Home



“My sister and I are stakeholders in EarlystART because of our passion and drive for early childhood education. We have 20 souls that we’re responsible for. Every child comes from a different walk of life – what comes easily to some won’t come easy to all. We’re working to see that every student is prepared to become independent, creative little learners that are also socially and emotionally resilient.”

**Amanda & A-Keyla Walker**  
EarlystART Teachers



“St. Mark Center became “home” and so much more to our family. The wraparound services were just what we needed, while St. Mark’s mission paved the way for my true calling: pursuing a career in the life-changing field of early childhood education. I could see how transformative it was for the children and families, and I knew that’s why God put St. Mark’s in my path.”

**Kimberly McKeithen**  
EarlystART Education Manager

# There's No Place Like Home



"I chose to work at EarlystART because I love children and making a positive impact in their lives. It is a quality program that does a lot to support families and the community. The teachers are amazing and held to a high standard, with many growth opportunities for training and education."

**Nancy Bickel**  
EarlystART Teacher



"EarlystART is like home. They take good care of my children, and keep me up-to-date with resources and what's happening in the community. These are the teachers I love and trust like family."

**E'Lisa Brown**  
Parent of five EarlystART students



# Artists-In-Residence

EarlystART's dedicated arts educators integrate the arts in meaningful experiences for our families. One of the ways we do this is through welcoming Artists in Residence to The Studio, our on-site makerspace. Watch this video to hear from one of EarlystART's Artists-In-Residence, What-If Puppets!



**Scan here to watch!**



# EarlystART is a place where children thrive and families flourish.

Meet Marlissa Willis: a parent of two EarlystART students, EarlystART Parent Advocate, and a member of our Policy Council as well as our Parent Committee.



**Scan here to watch!**



# Questions with Phyllis Stevens



Every organization should be so lucky to have a Phyllis. She's an above-and-beyond advocate, trusted advisor, and friend.

**How did you get involved with EarlystART?**

One gorgeous spring morning in 2016, my friend, Alan Dubois, invited me to visit EarlystART, an organization I knew nothing about. The mission resonated immediately – deeply touching my heart and completely invading my head. Then I met Deidre Anderson and, as they say, ‘That’s all she wrote.’ I was hooked!

**What inspires your dedication to EarlystART?**

When I was introduced to EarlystART, I had an epiphany. Though involved with social justice initiatives all my life, I’d never given much thought to the intrinsic power of high-quality early childhood education. Now, of course, I understand how investing in children from birth to five years will literally change the trajectory of their lives.

Continued on the next page

# Questions with Phyllis Stevens



“I’m thrilled to be connected to an organization that addresses the academic, social, and emotional needs of every student. It’s a place where children can flourish in self-

awareness and self-expression, and to imagine their place in the world. As for me, being involved is a way to live my values.”

**-Phyllis Stevens**

“

Why is it important to reach out to others about a cause that is so dear to your heart?

In an EarlystART video, the late community leader, Kenny Baum, said it best: “We have to do this.” And we do. For me, watching little learners grow is a joy but tells only part of the story.

I want others to know that, not only do our children and families benefit, the entire community benefits, society benefits.

”

# Save the Date for future EarlystART Events!

**earlystART**  
EMBRACE WONDER

## YOU'RE INVITED!

### Pre-K Graduation Celebrations

 <b>METRO</b> earlystART 3827 Troost Ave. Kansas City, MO 64109	 <b>NORTH</b> earlystART 6500 A Royal St. Pleasant Valley, MO 64109	 <b>ST. MARK</b> earlystART 2008 E 42nd St Kansas City, MO 64109
<b>May 23</b> STARTS 6:00 PM ENDS 7:00 PM	<b>May 24</b> STARTS 6:00 PM ENDS 6:30 PM	<b>May 25</b> STARTS 6:00 PM ENDS 7:00 PM

**earlystART**  
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# FALL FESTIVAL

**OCTOBER 28, 2023**  
**12 PM - 4 PM**



**early stART**



Bon Appétit!

## 2023 LITTLE Learners LUNCHEON

# SAVE THE DATE

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2023**  
**11:00 AM**  
GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium



Can we build it?  
YES, we can!



We want to be mermaids!



## Snow Much Fun!

December 2023

**earlystART**  
EMBRACE WONDER

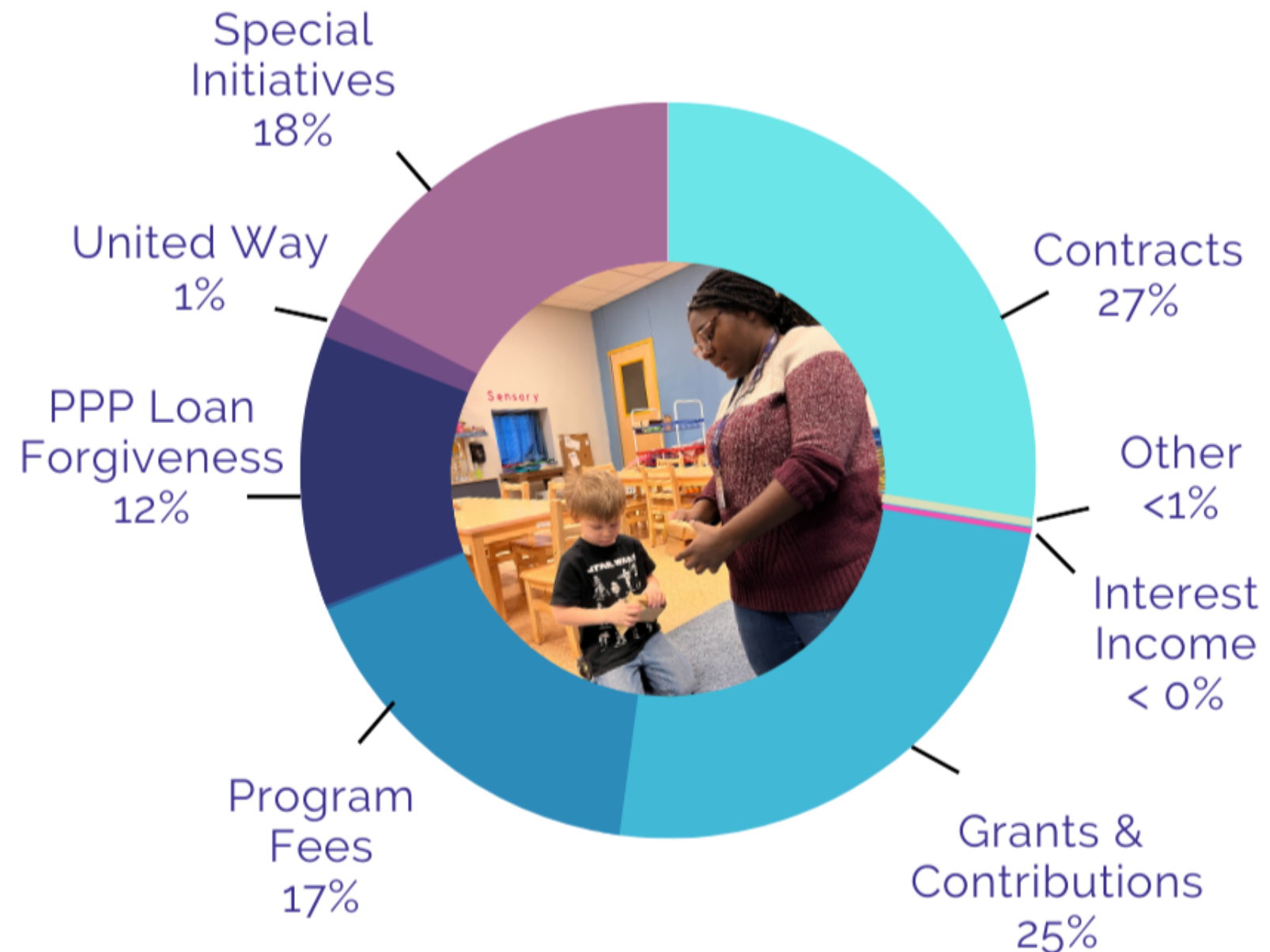


# Financial Overview 2022

EarllystART ended 2021 in a positive financial position which was primarily driven by lower costs due to enrollment and staffing shortages as well as a significant grant awarded for the StartingEarly Special Initiative.

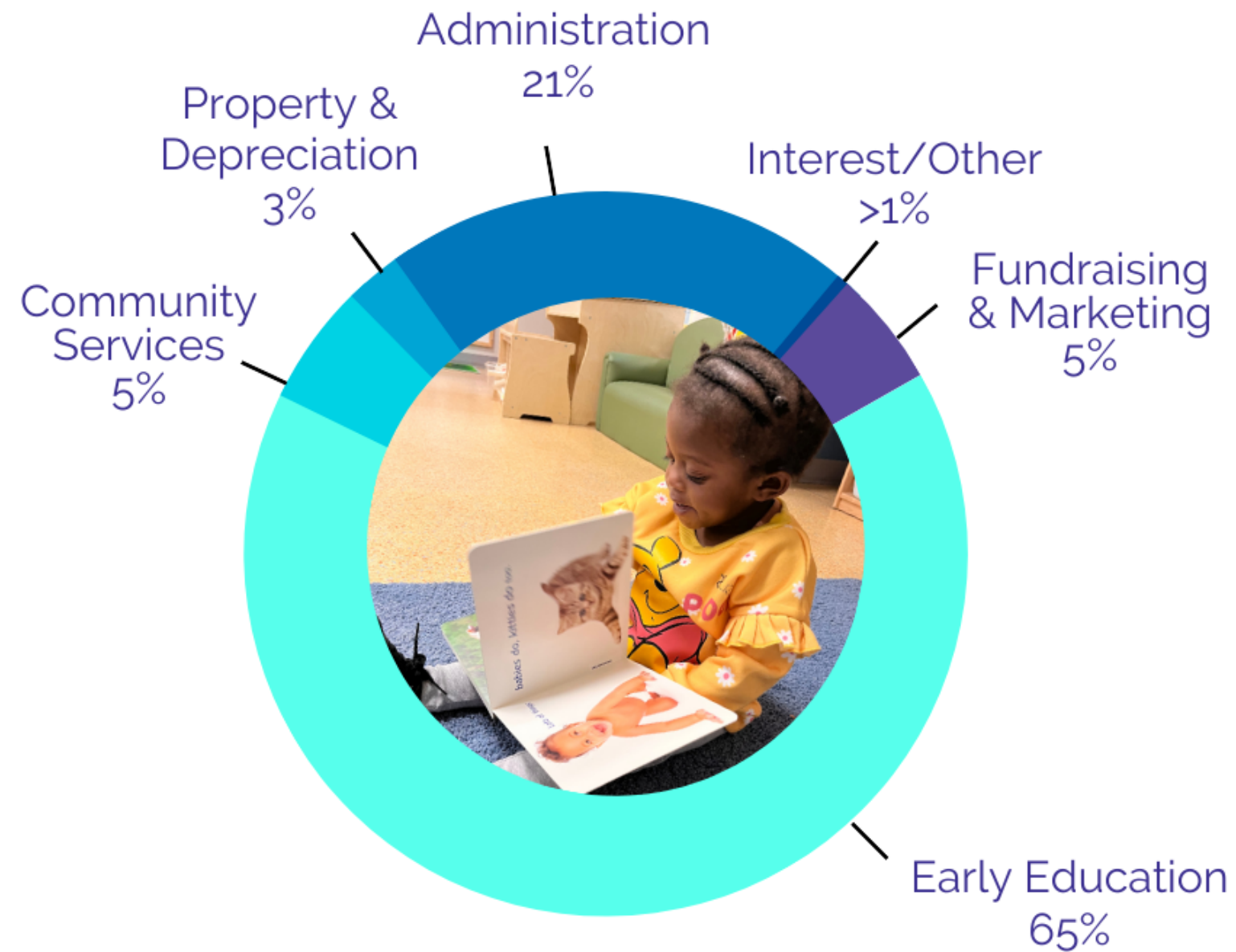
## Revenue & Contributions

Contracts	\$2,544,797
Grants/Contributions	\$2,293,463
Special Initiatives Grant	\$1,625,000
Program Fees	\$1,552,491
United Way	\$143,796
Interest Income	\$3,998
Other	\$16,861
PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$1,102,923
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$9,283,331</b>



# Financial Overview 2022

Looking ahead, 2023 will be a year of investing in expanded recruitment and professional development initiatives for early educators in our efforts to best serve students and families.



## Program Expense / Community Benefit

Early Education	\$4,797,238
Administration	\$1,644,308
Community Services	\$43,523
Special Initiatives	\$136,430
Fundraising/Marketing	\$79,533
Interest/Other	\$39,598
Property & Depreciation	\$169,462
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,910,092</b>

# DONOR SPOTLIGHTS



early**st**ART  
EMBRACE WONDER





# Donors \$1-\$499



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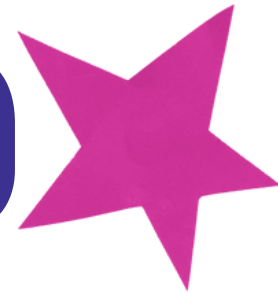
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Frances Gershon  
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