



**Seeds
of Learning**
Early Care and Education Center

**Gratitude
Report
2023**

Acknowledgements

We thank you for your continued support in our programs.

Early education is vital for our children, our community, and our future. Please know that your generous support has changed the lives of our at-risk children in Pagosa Springs that will affect generations.

Your support also allowed Seeds to offer competitive wages and benefits to our teachers and staff.

Simply put, we could not have done this without the support of our community and beyond and we are so grateful!

We would also like to thank all of the teachers, administrative staff, Board of Directors, parents, event sponsors and volunteers. Without all of you this would not be possible!



A Message From Our

Executive Director

2023 was an exciting and eventful year here at Seeds of Learning! Thanks to the support and generosity of our loyal donors, we were able to continue providing a high-quality early childhood program to approximately 60 families while maintaining affordable tuition for all. Our focus this year was on quality improvement in our program, specifically teacher-child interactions, classroom environments, and furthering teacher education. Early childhood programs are not created equally, and at Seeds we understand that high-quality programs can provide so much more for the overall development of young children.

“Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort.” Our teachers worked diligently this year to analyze their current teacher-child interactions using the CLASS evaluation, or Classroom Assessment Scoring System. This evaluation method helps our teachers focus on what high-quality interactions look like in the classroom, measure the quality of their current interactions, and ultimately improve their teaching quality. High-quality interactions are crucial in early childhood classrooms because they encourage development of a child’s ability to relate, self-regulate, communicate, and think – the core skills to academic learning.

“A quality environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences.” At Seeds, our teachers set up safe, responsive, and nurturing environments for children. Our program utilized ECERS, the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale, to examine our current classroom materials and environments for quality. We scored extremely well in this evaluation, higher than we ever have in the past, so were very excited to report this to our families. This evaluation would also be used to improve our Colorado Shines rating. This rating is a symbol of quality for all licensed early childhood programs in the state of Colorado. We have applied to move from level 4 to 5, which is the highest rating of quality a program can earn. This rating demonstrates that our program has a supportive learning environment, supports children’s safety and health, and encourages parents as partners in their child’s learning.

“Quality teachers can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.” We encourage our teachers to never stop learning. All of our educators here at Seeds have an in-depth understanding of child development and how to effectively manage the classroom and support academic growth. This year, we were able to assist four teachers in completing external early childhood courses through our local college and obtaining the Colorado ECE credential for lead preschool teachers. Research shows that preschool teachers with higher levels of education are more effective which leads to better outcomes for children.

We cannot thank our donors enough for supporting our program here at Seeds. We are doing amazing things for our community and the families here, and we couldn’t do it without your help! “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

With warm regards,

Michelle Cusick

Our Story So Far



WHO WE ARE

Seeds of Learning is a stand-alone, not for profit, nationally accredited (NAEYC) early childcare and education center, serving approximately 58 children, ages 2.5 – 5 years old, in three classrooms year-round. We have transformed the lives of over 1,000 preschoolers and their families for over 25 years.

As a community-based facility, we encompass parenting classes, educational opportunities for our families and other early childhood professionals and participate in community outreach projects.

OUR VISION

The vision at Seeds of Learning is to work in partnership with families to provide a learning community in a developmentally appropriate environment which promotes the growth of the young children.

The target populations for Seeds of Learning are families from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds with a minimum of 51% of our enrollment from at-risk and/or low-income children and their families. Seeds offers a sliding scale tuition based on the income of each family. All tuition rates are greatly reduced from the actual costs.

OUR MISSION

Our mission at Seeds of Learning is providing a high quality, child-centered preschool education for our community with exceptional teachers facilitating the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of children in order to foster a solid foundation for success and a lifelong love of learning.

“You can expect the highest standards in early childhood education at Seeds. We are brain builders, not babysitters.”

Our Unique Programming



CREATIVE CURRICULUM

This child-directed, play-based program was chosen for our Seeds' students because it is based on the latest research about how children learn best. It allows teachers to autonomously decide what needs to be taught to meet every child's individual needs. It meets all the standards put forth for effective early childhood curricula by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Children's progress is observed, assessed, and recorded online daily. Quarterly the staff completes check points on all 38 developmental goals for each child and twice a year teachers conduct Parent-Teacher Conferences with families to create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each child. Online assessments are available to families to follow development progress.

THE INCREDIBLE YEARS & PARENT TRAINING

The Incredible Years, an award-winning 14-week parent training, teacher training, and child social skills training approach to early childhood education. Seeds of Learning proudly uses The Incredible Years Dinosaur School for children to learn to understand feelings and practice conflict management skills while improving their cognitive development using puppets.

NURTURING THE BODY & MIND

Seeds serves breakfast, a nutritious afternoon snack and a hot lunch prepared every day by Archuleta Seniors, Inc. Nutrition is critical to the brain as well as physical development. The children are provided with the opportunity to learn about a wide variety of foods and get started on a path to healthy eating habits.

Continuous Quality Improvement



NAEYC - National Association for Education of Young Children

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning. NAEYC Accreditation ensures that programs are safe, well prepared, and intentional about ensuring children's success.

As a reputable indicator of quality, NAEYC Accreditation correlates with children's greater readiness and success in school and beyond; increased educational attainment rates; and overall healthier lifestyles.

Seeds of Learning is proud to have become NAEYC accredited in 2021.

Since receiving NAEYC Accreditation, Seeds of Learning has graduated 84 students who were well equipped and prepared for kindergarten.

2023 Accomplishments with Your Support

Quality Improvement and Staff Development

- Program Director earned Large Centers Director Certification
- Four teachers completed Early Childhood Development Course at Fort Lewis College
- Teachers participated in 8 on-site professional development days

Serving the Whole Child

- Provided parents and families with Incredible Years Parenting Class - a free, 14-week class
- All children provided free Dental, Vision, and Hearing tests through community partners
- Engaged parents and family members in the classroom through regularly scheduled activity nights and by engaging students in their respective talents and trades.

Retaining Top Talent

- Increased Teacher Aide pay in order to be competitive to retain staff
- Health insurance premiums of full-time staff paid for by Seeds

Counting our Blessings



30

GRADUATES

30 preschoolers graduated in 2023 and went on to kindergarten. Seeds of Learning students demonstrate a higher readiness for learning at the beginning of kindergarten and continue to grow at a faster rate throughout the school year compared to their peers according to an Archuleta County School District Kindergarten 2015 Diebels comparison.

10

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT EVENTS

We value our parents and encourage families to participate in our program as much as possible.

Some of the events included a back-to-school night, math night, literacy night, science night, and art night. All of these events were highly successful with most of our families in attendance!

15

PARENTS ATTENDED INCREDIBLE YEARS PARENTING CLASS

Because of your support, Seeds offered free research-based parenting courses for families who might need some extra strategies and encouragement. We love our families and understand we are partners in supporting their child's development and success.

Growing Student's Minds and Dreams

Seeds students were invited on two field trips during 2023. Students and attending families had the opportunity to explore the Pagosa Wetlands and also went to Jack-A-Lope Acres in Ignacio.

Seeds recognizes the extraordinary benefits of introducing young children to various occupations and age groups in our community. Seeds students had the opportunity to learn from a variety of adult professionals, including elementary school teacher, fireman, police officers, EMT's, Forest Rangers, librarian, and Spanish instruction – all from members of our community

100%

OF SEEDS LEAD TEACHERS HOLD EDUCATION DEGREES



100%

OF FAMILIES RECIEVE REDUCED TUITION



Thanks to the generous support of our community, Seeds of Learning supplements the full cost of tuition for all families. This is done through a sliding-scale based on family size and income.

Our 2023 Board of Directors



Charged with overseeing the financial health of Seeds of Learning, this dedicated group guided efforts to supplement tuition for 100% of Seeds' students in 2023. Their determination and hard work prove what passionate volunteers can accomplish.

2023 Board of Directors:

Lisa Peters - Board President

Martin E. Rose - Board Member

Evelyn Tennyson - Vice President

Bob Brobst - Board Treasurer

Janae Ash - Secretary

Lauri Heraty - Board Member

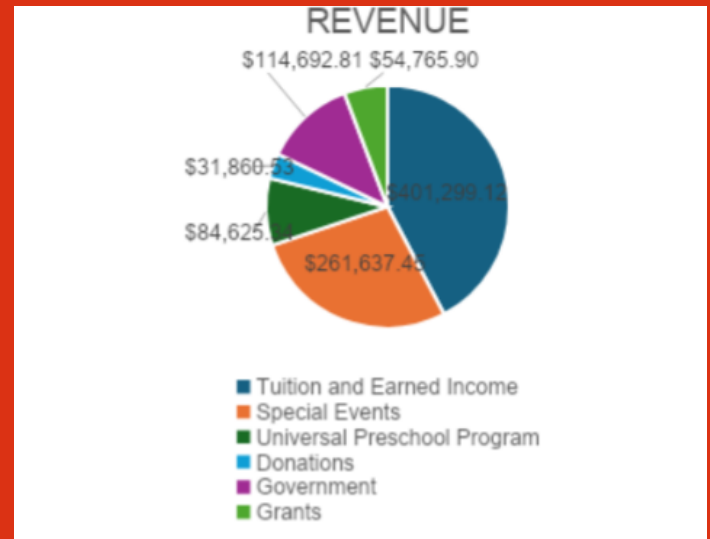
Bob Scott - Board Member

"Seeds of Learning has more than lived up to our expectations. Our 3 year old loves going to "his school" and has grown wonderfully under the guidance of his teachers and the customized developmental program they maintain for each child. The teaching staff and administration have always been professional, caring, and very responsive. There is no where else in Pagosa, we would rather him be." ~ Doug Saylor, Seeds Parent

A Glance at Your Incredible Support

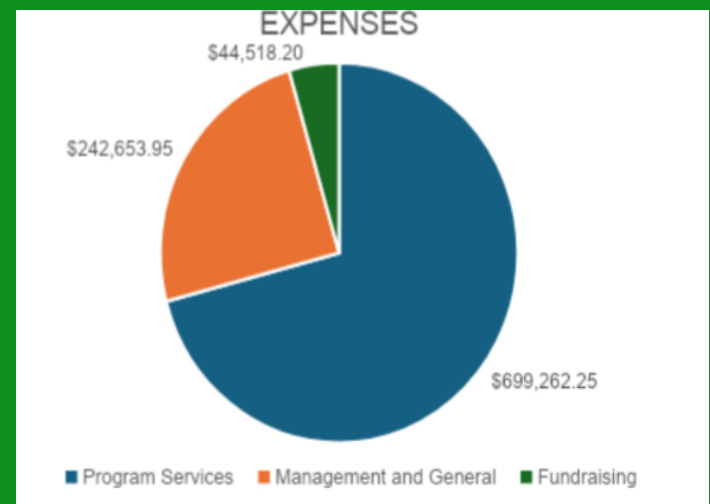
REVENUE

Tuition and Earned Income	401,299.12
Special Events	261,637.45
Grants	54,765.90
Universal Preschool Program	84,625.40
Donations	31,860.53
Government	114,692.81
Total Revenue	948,881.15



EXPENSES

Program Services	699,262.25
Management & General	242,653.95
Fundraising	44,518.20
Total Expenses	986,434.40



ASSETS

Long-term Investment Fund	1,809,927.45
Reserves	335,000

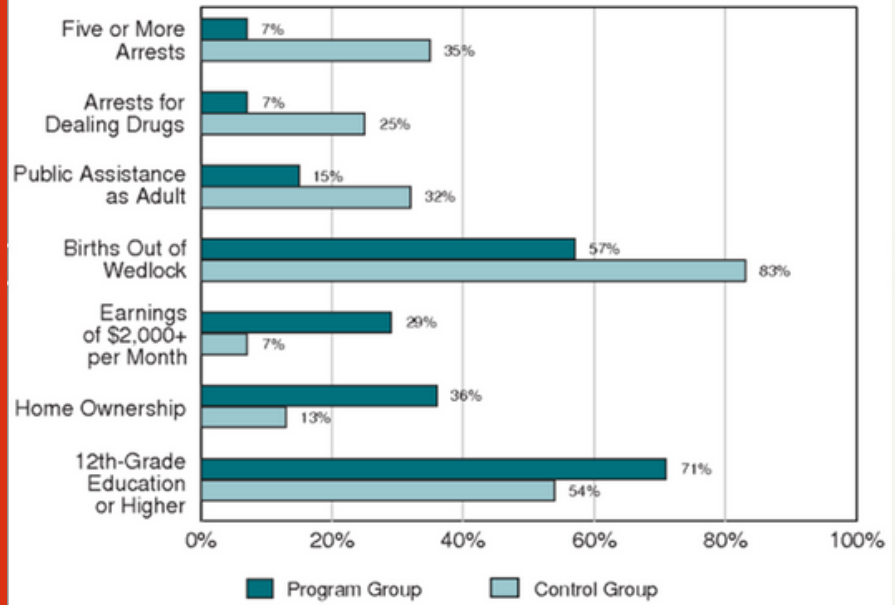
“Seeds of Learning excellently equips young children in our community to successfully navigate the next phase of their education and development. As a kindergarten teacher at Pagosa Springs Elementary School for over thirty years, I saw firsthand how confident, settled, and ready to learn the Seeds of Learning students were. The child directed learning and support from teachers given to parents help students of all backgrounds to learn and flourish. The teachers take children where they are and challenge and motivate them to soar!” – Ms. Kathy Faber

Community Benefits

"It is easier to build strong children the repair broken adults."

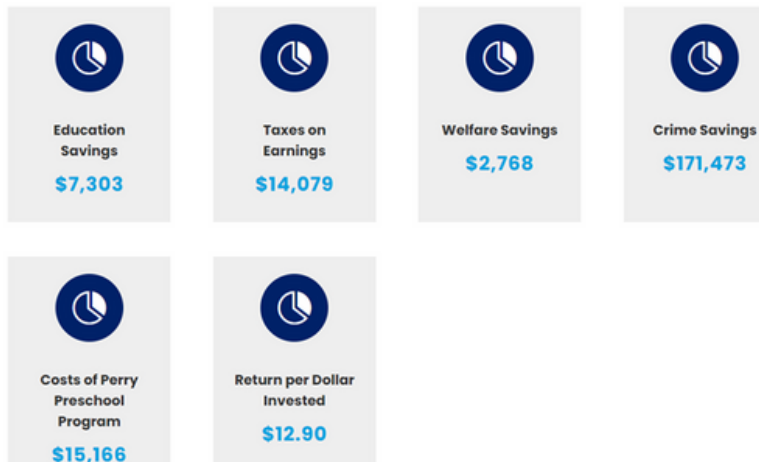
**"By supporting Seeds programming, children will become contributing members in our society and have a foundation that they will need to graduate high school, go on to college, or a trade school."
~Evelyn Tennyson, Seeds Supporter**

Figure 1: Major Findings of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project for Participants Followed Up at Age 27



Though all children benefit from high quality early education, at-risk children receive the greatest value. Children who have access to high quality early childhood education experienced: fewer teen pregnancies, less arrests, higher graduation rates, earned a higher income, are more likely to go obtain a higher education or trade, lower rates of substance abuse, are less likely to be on public assistance programs which lowers the cost of more expensive interventions later in life.

Return on Investment



- Return on investment is up to 10% for ages 3-4
- Supports working parents
- Attracts new talent to the community
- Reduces at-risk factors

"Without Seeds' sliding tuition scale, my family and I could not have afforded to remain in Pagosa Springs" ~ Seeds parent of two.



Seeds of Learning

Early Care and Education Center

CONTACT US

If you are new to the area or just want to learn more about Seeds & how you can get involved with the organization, please reach out! We would love to hear from you.

Seeds of Learning

970-264-5513

575 S. 7th Street

P.O Box 5831

Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

GrowingSeeds.org

Seedsoflearning@growingseeds.org



"Sunny's connection at Seeds felt instantaneous, and the comfort we felt leaving her in the capable hands of her teachers has been so amazing! We are so grateful for a place that feels like a small family where she learns so much while having fun, makes great friends, and has wonderful teachers investing in her life. She grows every day and always comes home with a smile from her day at Seeds." ~ The Thompsons