



**abcd**

**HEAD START &  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



# CARING FOR OURSELVES, WHILE CARING FOR OTHERS.

ABCD Head Start staff work passionately and care deeply for the children and families of our program. As an inter-connected community, we recognize that we cannot care for others without also caring for ourselves.

In August 2022 ABCD Head Start staff came together in-person for the first time since the onset of the pandemic to launch the 2022-2023 school year. The day was devoted to honoring staff who are retiring, recognizing staff for years of service, and acknowledging those who have acquired degrees and credentials, as well as celebrating a Head Start “Hero or Heroine” from each center. A variety of sessions were offered that allowed staff to participate and learn about physical and mental health and wellness. In February 2023, we came together again for a variety of workshops on self-care and a day of celebration.

Recognizing that the human service and early education field is a challenging but rewarding career, we continued our endeavor to recognize staff through increased compensation. In 2022-2023 we increased the entry level rate for 30 front-line job titles by an average of 9.6%. We utilized state funding awarded by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to issue retention bonuses with amounts based on salary in October 2022.



In turn, staff provided services to children and families with great care, thought and intentionality. Success can be measured in a variety of ways, but high quality service provision is illustrated by our families themselves, who reported at the end of the school year that:

- They are more likely to engage in outdoor activities regularly;
- They feel more prepared for their child's transition to their next educational setting;
- They feel more connected to other parents and their community;
- Perhaps most importantly, they feel more prepared to advocate for their child's educational needs



# WHO WE ARE

One of the core programs of President Lyndon Johnson’s Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Head Start remains an exemplary family development program that each year serves more than a million disadvantaged children nationwide. In 1965, ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development) was designated as one of the program’s original demonstration projects.

Since then, ABCD Head Start & Children’s Services has served tens of thousands of children and families in Boston and the Mystic Valley area, offering comprehensive education, health, dental, nutrition and related services for children from birth to age five, as well as for pregnant mothers. Parent participation is a cornerstone of the program. In addition, we strive to meet each child’s needs while reflecting the community’s ethnic and cultural values.

In the 2022-2023 program year ABCD Head Start centers, along with our partner programs (Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, Horizons for Homeless Children, Infants and Other People, John F. Kennedy Family Service Center and Nurture) have a cumulative funded enrollment of 2,136. Together, we represent 30 centers, inclusive of 3 family child care programs, dedicated to providing services to pregnant women, children birth through age five, and their families:

## Funded Enrollment



## Cumulative Enrollment





## **Our Mission**

**ABCD Head Start & Children's Services, a family development program, is committed to providing opportunities and services to the diverse low-income children and families of Boston and the Mystic Valley area. We support them with school readiness, self-sufficiency and success in life.**

## **ABCD Leadership**

### **BOARD OFFICERS**

Sean K. Daughtry, *Chair*

Nancy Dickerson, *Vice Chair*

Marie Greig, *Vice Chair*

Edward Katz, *Vice Chair*

Rev. Dr. Florence King, *Vice Chair*

James Owens, Jr., *Vice Chair*

Patricia Washington, *Treasurer*

Candice Caines-Francis, CPA, *Assistant Treasurer*

Julia Hardy Cofield, Esq., *Clerk*

### **ABCD SENIOR STAFF**

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.  
*President and CEO*

Flossy Calderón  
*Director, ABCD Head Start & Children's Services*





## **Leadership and Governance: ABCD HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL**

Parents are an integral part of program planning and governance. Parents participate in meetings, committees and groups at the center and citywide level. Family feedback and expertise is critical to the foundation and success of the program. Many parents serve as members of the Parent Policy Council. Policy Council members are responsible for the direction of the ABCD Head Start & Children's Services.

### **2023 ABCD HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL OFFICERS**

#### CHAIR

Ana Berreondo, *Allston/Brighton*

#### VICE CHAIRPERSON

Jessica Frazier, *Harrison Ave*

#### SECRETARY

June Castillo, *Bradshaw St*

#### MASSACHUSETTS HEAD START ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE

Carmen Rondash, *JFK*

#### ABCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTATIVE

Fatima Villareal, *Horizons for Homeless Children*

#### ALTERNATE ABCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPRESENTATIVE

Kennithya Ellis, *Horizons for Homeless Children, Mattapan*

# SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

## CHILDREN & FAMILIES

**Total Number of Families**

**2141**

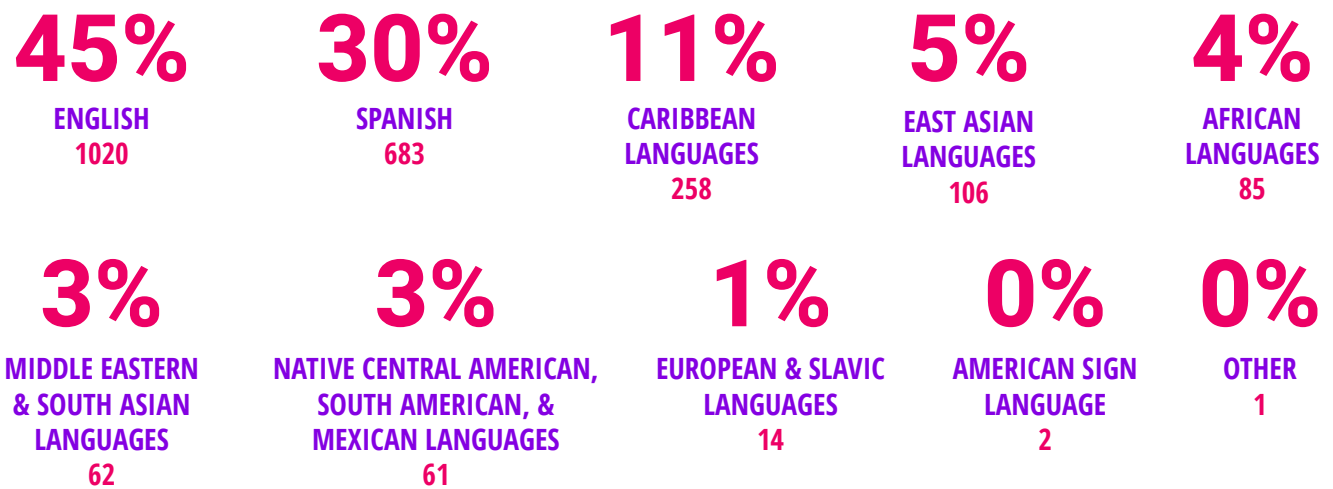
**Total Number of Children**

**2292**

### Race and Ethnicity of Children

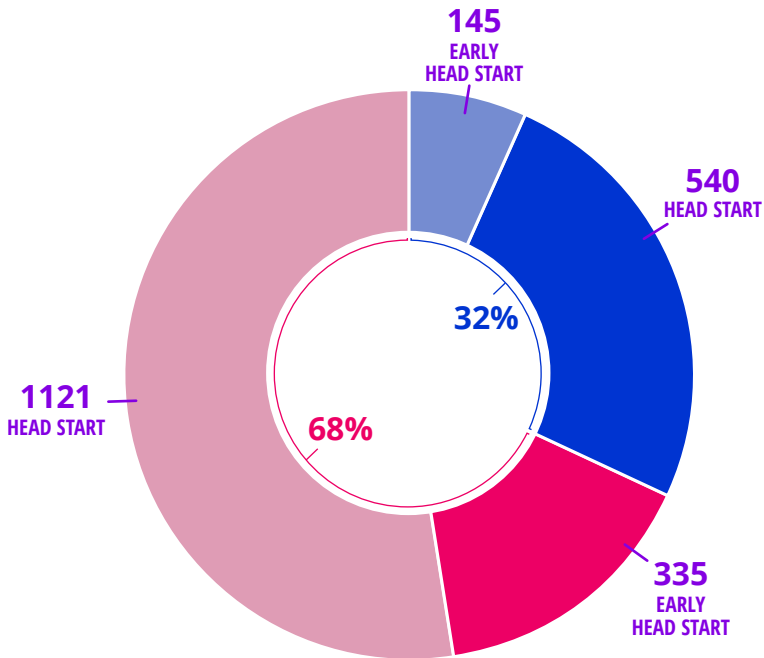
	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE	BI-RACIAL/ MULTI-RACIAL	OTHER	UNSPECIFIED
NON-HISPANIC OR NON-LATINO ORIGIN	2	127	908	0	105	66	35	0
HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN	0	0	68	2	28	126	822	3

### Primary Language of Children



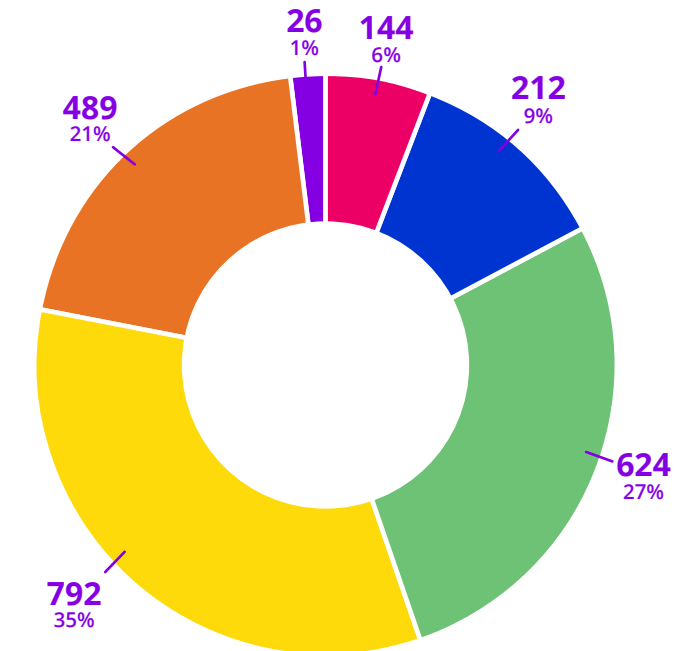


## Family Composition



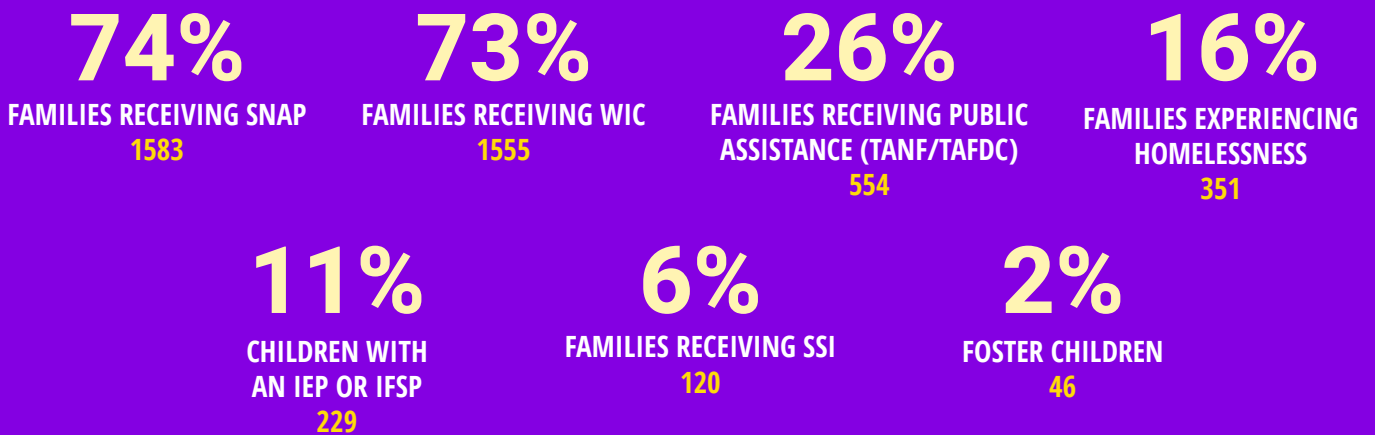
**TWO PARENT FAMILIES**      **SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES**

## Age of Children

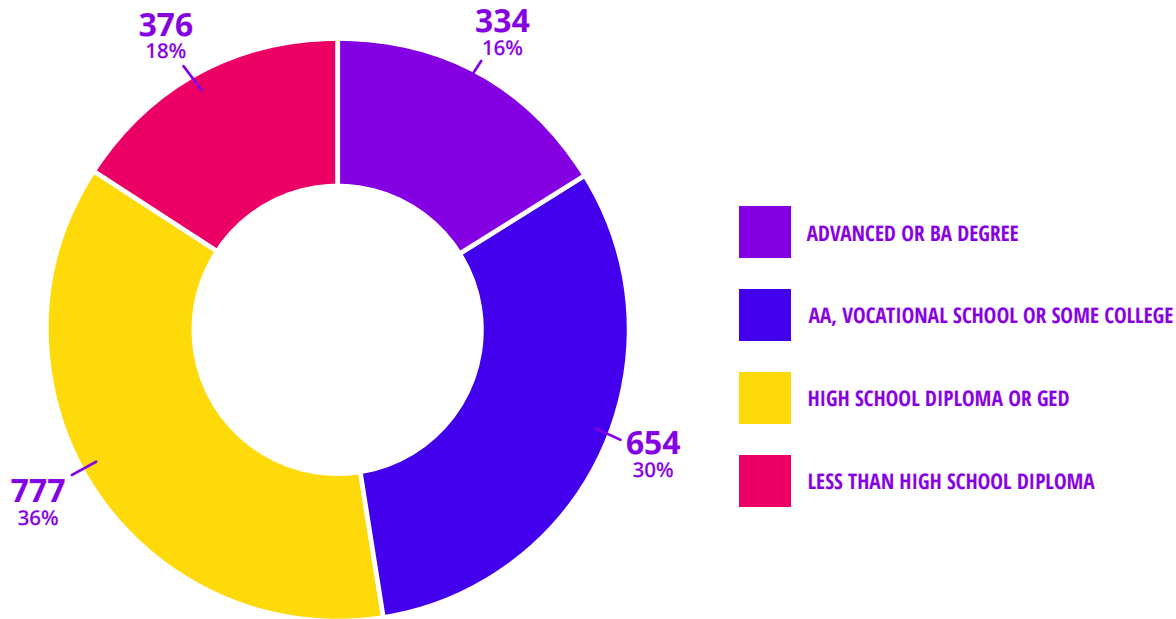


**CHILDREN UNDER 1**      **1 YEAR OLD**      **2 YEARS OLD**  
**3 YEARS OLD**      **4 YEARS OLD**      **5 YEARS OLD**

## Family Needs



## Parent/Guardian Education Level



## Family Services Rendered

CLOTHING	1322	SUPPORTING TRANSITIONS BETWEEN PROGRAMS <i>(i.e., EHS to HS, HS to kindergarten)</i>	214
PARENTING EDUCATION	1071	EDUCATION ON NUTRITION	272
HOLIDAY ASSISTANCE	828	ASSISTANCE IN ENROLLING INTO AN EDUCATION OR JOB TRAINING PROGRAM	209
EMERGENCY/CRISIS INTERVENTION <i>(e.g., meeting immediate needs for food, clothing, or shelter)</i>	868	HOUSING ASSISTANCE <i>(e.g., subsidies, utilities, repairs)</i>	83
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	1394	ASSET BUILDING SERVICES <i>(e.g., financial education, debt counseling)</i>	62
PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HEAD START	722	ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) TRAINING	65
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES	292	RESEARCH-BASED PARENTING CURRICULUM	54

# Family Employment Status at End of Enrollment

AT LEAST ONE PARENT/GUARDIAN IS EMPLOYED,  
IN JOB TRAINING, OR IN SCHOOL

NO PARENT/GUARDIAN IS EMPLOYED,  
IN JOB TRAINING, OR IN SCHOOL

**61%**  
1298

**39%**  
843

## Health

**97%**

OF CHILDREN WITH  
A MEDICAL HOME  
2228

**96%**

OF CHILDREN WITH HEALTH  
INSURANCE AT END OF ENROLLMENT  
2211

**87%**

OF CHILDREN WITH  
A DENTAL HOME  
1992

**15%**

OF CHILDREN WITH A  
CHRONIC CONDITION  
335



# SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

## STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

### Total Number of Educators

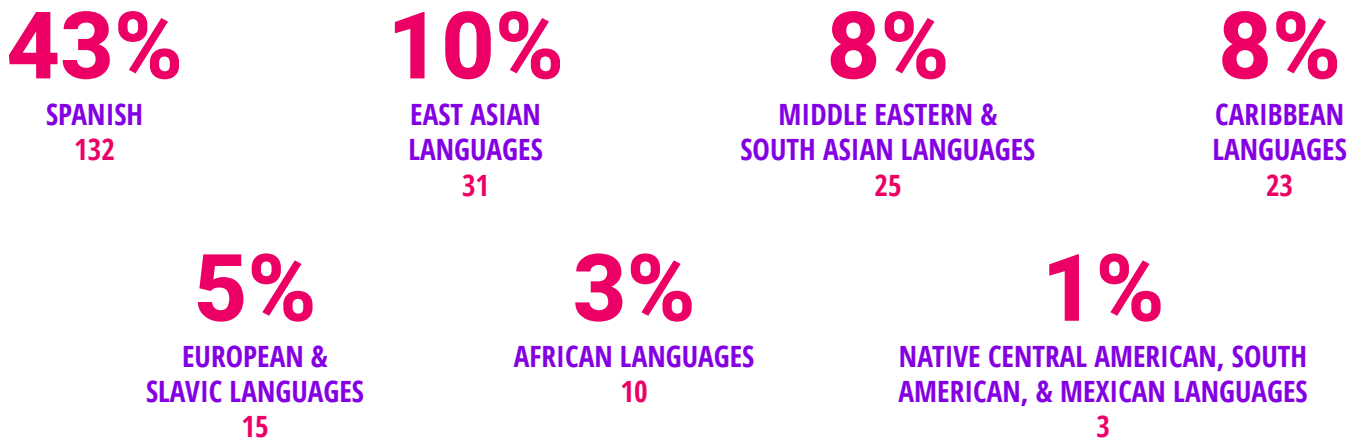
628

### Race and Ethnicity of Educators

	AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	WHITE	BI-RACIAL/ MULTI-RACIAL	OTHER	UNSPECIFIED
NON-HISPANIC OR NON-LATINO ORIGIN	0	36	86	0	43	3	5	0
HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN	0	0	10	0	21	8	89	7

220 Educators Proficient Languages other than English

### Primary Language of Educators



# Education Staff

## NUMBER OF TEACHERS

EARLY HEAD START



HEAD START



TOTAL  
237

## NUMBER OF TEACHER ASSISTANTS

HEAD START



TOTAL  
68

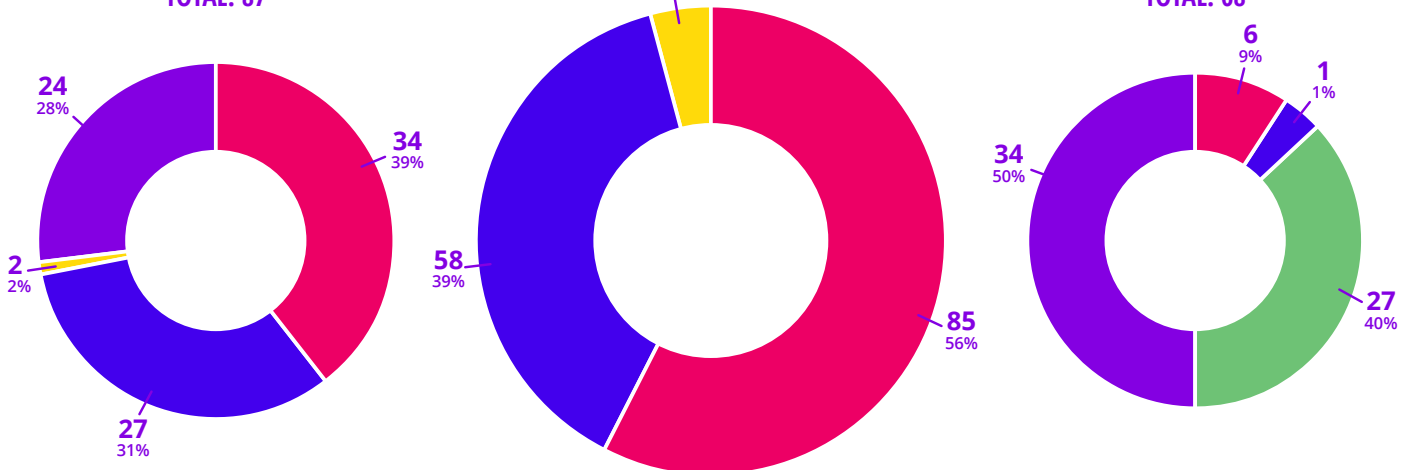
# 44 Education Staff Received Intensive Coaching

## Educator Qualifications

Head Start Teachers  
TOTAL: 150

Early Head Start Teachers  
TOTAL: 87

Head Start Teacher Assistants  
TOTAL: 68





FEATURED STORY:  
**STAFF PROFILE**

**MELANIE SAHKTA**

*ABCD Head Start Mentor / Coach*

As a little girl growing up in Boston, Melanie Sahkta, her sister, and cousins would play “school,” and she was always the teacher. As she grew older, she realized that teaching was her calling.



She spent five years with an early education center where she transitioned from teacher to coach. In 2022, she joined ABCD Head Start & Children’s Services as a mentor/coach, and she was immediately struck by ABCD’s commitment to diversity and cultural sensitivity. She was thrilled to see the significant diversity of ABCD Head Start leaders and staff during a video call on her first day. She said, “This is where I want to work; this is where I want to be and grow.” Management and staff mirror the children and families that ABCD Head Start serves, and incorporating racial and cultural richness into the curriculum – and even in meals and snacks – is a core aspect of the program.



As a mentor/coach, Melanie helps educators to develop their skills and grow in their practice. She finds inspiration and camaraderie in her colleagues, as well. She looks forward to continuing to collaborate with her co-workers, but when asked how she’d like her career to evolve, she said she could see herself as an education supervisor “because I love working with people and being their biggest cheerleader.”



But her greatest satisfaction comes from the children, and for her, that means the infants, toddlers and preschoolers at the ABCD Head Start centers in East Boston, Everett, Malden, and Medford. “I was always a strong believer in building a child up from the start, and watching them grow is very impactful,” she said.



FEATURED STORY:  
**STAFF PROFILE**

**OMOLAYO MASU**

*ABCD Early Head Start Teacher*

ABCD Head Start & Children's Services, Jamaica Plain





Omolayo Musa has been an early childhood educator for 25 years. That means she now experiences the thrill of watching some of her former students heading off to college. “Some of the kids love me so much that I will follow them throughout their lives,” she said, noting that “seeing their development from infancy to adulthood is incredible.”

Omolayo joined ABCD Head Start & Children’s Services seven years ago, and while she has taught preschoolers, she has devoted most of her career to infants and toddlers. To her, there’s nothing more gratifying than seeing a child’s excitement when they learn something new – shapes, colors, letters. “That is pure joy right there,” she said, adding “When I first saw that, I knew I wanted to do this forever.”



Her day starts at 8:15 a.m. Parents drop off their children, and the little ones, ecstatic to see her, squeal with happiness and greet her like a family member. She washes their hands, monitors them while they play, helps them eat breakfast, changes their diapers, and brushes their teeth.

From there, the plan can vary. They might go out for a walk on a sunny day or engage in learning activities such as finger painting, which allows the children to explore the texture of paint in their hands, or music time, where the children learn body movements and songs.

Working with young children is humbling because you feel “like the foundation of everything they’re going to learn throughout their lives,” she said. It’s important to her to be a positive role model, as well. “While they’re with me, they’re going to feel safe, have fun – and learn a lot!”

It’s a rewarding job, but it’s also stressful. To unwind, Omolayo spends time with her 11-year-old son. “Being with him helps me,” she said, and much of the time is spent watching him play football, soccer, karate, and track. And he has access to a great coach, since Omolayo played all of those sports, as well.

She urges anyone who loves children – and has patience – to consider a career in early childhood education because “seeing them grow is amazing.”

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



This year ABCD Head Start & Children's Services rose to the occasion again, navigating an unprecedented transition year from the pandemic. Children, families, staff and community partners worked together to adapt to an ever-changing environment. As always, our Head Start community worked collectively to ensure children and families receive the highest quality care and services.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the staff of ABCD Head Start. Your unwavering commitment, resilience, and enduring support have been nothing short of extraordinary. This year we continued to reimagine what it means to be part of the early childhood field. I recognize that this work is rewarding, but can also be challenging. We focused on what it means to care

for ourselves so that we can, in turn, care for others. It is with great pride that we share this annual report, which features two staff members who are up and coming leaders. We will continue to invest in our workforce, as they provide an invaluable service to our community.

I feel fortunate to be part of this remarkable team and community. Each child, parent, caregiver, staff member, advocate and community partner is a unique and important part of our success. I am excited and hopeful for the year ahead, and look forward to working with you to reach great heights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Flossy" with a stylized flourish underneath.

**Flossy Calderón**

*Vice President, ABCD Head Start & Children's Services*





**abc'd**

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178 Tremont Street, Boston MA 02111 | [bostonheadstart.org](http://bostonheadstart.org)