NCFL inspires and engages families in the pursuit of learning together by creating a culture of family engagement across the educational spectrum.

325 West Main Street, Suite 300 • Louisville, KY 40202
502-584-1133 • www.familieslearning.org

2013 ANNUAL REPORT
AMPLIFYING EDUCATION TO SUPPORT FAMILIES LEARNING TOGETHER

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ANNUAL REPORT 2013
Dear Partners,

The family unit — no matter the composition — is the one constant across the education spectrum. Whether we're considering our youngest students attending pre-school, school-aged children at public, private or charter schools, or adults attending night classes – they all come with their own unique family story. For more than 24 years, NCFL has inspired and engaged multiple generations in the pursuit of learning, leveraging one common denominator: the power harnessed when families learn together.

In 2013, we reached families and those serving them in more ways than ever before by continually challenging ourselves to produce assets that matter for today's families. Families are dealing with so many stressors and challenges — social, financial, professional, and the list goes on. NCFL exists to ease these burdens by creating high quality and relevant learning opportunities for families throughout an ecosystem blending formal and informal environments. We meet families when and where they gather.

As you read through this annual report, you'll see evidence of families learning through both new partnerships we've cultivated and those that are long-standing but continuously improving. You will learn about how NCFL uses creativity and innovation to bridge the home-school divide so that families can have meaningful learning experiences anytime and anywhere. You will discover how we empower our networks by disseminating carefully curated opportunities and information relevant to them. And, most importantly, you will see evidence of success through stories told by the families and advocates themselves—stories of those empowered to achieve and inspire greater economic and educational success with the support of NCFL and its exemplary partners.

Engaging families in learning together is the way forward not only for families themselves, but for our society. When we view and treat all families as powerful and valuable community partners, we can achieve so much more. I encourage you to walk the walk with us – join us in the family learning movement.

Sincerely,

Sharon Darling
President and Founder

HELP SUPPORT FAMILIES LEARNING TOGETHER BY MAKING A DONATION AT
www.familieslearning.org/donate.php

Your gift will support NCFL's efforts to elevate learning so that individuals achieve higher levels of confidence and economic well-being; families set and pursue bigger dreams and aspirations; and our communities prosper and grow with a more skilled, competitive, and inspired workforce.
On National Family Literacy Day® 2013, NCFL released a new name and logo for the organization, officially becoming the National Center for Families Learning. The new brand identity gives a nod to its past and a steady look to the future by evolving the way literacy is perceived—as skills that exist on a continuum and fulfill the modern-day requirement of lifelong learning. NCFL believes learning does not end with becoming literate—lifelong learning is crucial for success, opportunity, and economic prosperity.

The plural “families” addresses and represents the collective whole in society and indicates learning is for all families. The choice also shifts the meaning of “learning” from a noun to a verb. “Families learning” is active, signifying the way learning is an ongoing process and pursuit. Families of all socioeconomic levels and backgrounds face educational challenges; and likewise, all families hold the keys to their success.

NCFL continues to champion foundational concepts like Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time® and remains tightly connected to supporting parents and children working to improve basic literacy skills. Our name change embraces the territory we have been forging in the educational spectrum for years. We will continue to pioneer innovative learning strategies and solutions, meeting those most in need where and how they live.

Stay up-to-date on NCFL’s work and the latest news in the fields of education, wonder, and families learning together. Register to receive NCFL’s weekly and monthly publications at www.familieslearning.org/subscribe.php
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Sincerely,

Sharon Darling
President and Founder, NCFL
Rigorous Content Leads to Serious Fun

Student engagement has become a popular phrase in education for good reason: if children aren’t motivated, excited, or inspired by a given topic or content area, they are far less likely to learn from it. This understanding motivates NCFL to continue to enhance and improve our signature digital learning platform, Wondeorpolis®, which encourages the use of wonder as an avenue to boost student engagement nationwide.

Children, parents, teachers, and siblings continue to marvel at the Wonders of the Day®, three years after its launch. Kids and adults alike are eager to explore everyday Wonders like #255: “Is Dry Ice Really Dry?” and #1075: “Where Do Last Names Come From?” Some topics are even nominated by the readers themselves, providing a sense of safety, empowerment, and pride among the community of learners. And, every person—child, adult, parent, or educator—continues to receive a personalized response to his or her comments made on Wonderopolis, a function we believe is critical to maintaining the highest level of engagement among learners.

The growing Wonderopolis audience is responding favorably to changes made in 2013. There were 3.8 million total visits with a 60 percent return rate last year. New features accommodate a variety of learners, allowing for more interactivity with additions like an audio component that reads aloud the informational text in each Wonder. These new functions keep engaged kids coming back for more and help struggling readers and those learning English to better navigate the Wonders.

Education experts around the sphere also continue to utilize and recognize Wonderopolis as an outstanding resource to advance and support student learning. At American Library Association’s annual conference, the American Association of School Librarians named Wonderopolis one of the 25 Best Websites for Teaching and Learning in 2013.
A Lifetime of Wonder

Second-grade teacher and mom, Barbara Phillips, is such a believer in Wonderopolis® that she not only infuses it as a part of her daily core instruction at Monroe Elementary School in Monroe, Ohio, but she also uses it with her two children at home and features it on her blog.

“Wonder can inspire children of all ages to become engaged in learning,” Barbara says. “Children, by nature, are curious about their world and environment. By engaging children of all ages to explore their curiosity, they are on the path to becoming lifelong learners.” And Barbara is leveraging the power of Wonder to create those life lessons and unique educational experiences that enhance the engagement, learning, and discovery of children and families—including her own.

She has found that even her most disengaged students are drawn to the magic of Wonderopolis. Her rowdy second grade boys often compete with one another at the lunch table to guess what tomorrow’s Wonder of the Day® will be. She even uses the platform to build a sense of community among her classroom by diving into themes like random acts of kindness and paying it forward, Wonders #137 and #502, respectively.

But, perhaps most importantly, Barbara is also proving that Wonder can serve as an equalizer for kids and families of all backgrounds. One of her most gratifying teaching experiences resulted from Wonder of the Day #509: “Have You Ever Lost Your Marbles?” After exploring that Wonder, one of her students who is normally shirked by his peers became the classroom hero because he brought in his set of marbles to share. The other students couldn’t wait to get a turn with Joe’s real-life marbles after learning about them the previous day. The lesson served as much more than a primer on marbles for Joe. The real-world connections made by transforming everyday topics into robust learning experiences matter for Joe and millions of other students using Wonderopolis across the globe.
Health Literacy Initiative Improves Habits and Behaviors of Families

Health literacy is more important than ever before, when today one in three children in America is overweight or obese, and more than one in three adults is clinically obese. The effects of understanding and implementing healthy routines go beyond feeling or looking well; sound nutritional habits are proven to be directly linked to one’s ability to thrive in educational settings.

NCFL is pioneering real solutions to combat these alarming statistics. In 2013, NCFL produced a curriculum and supporting materials for family-focused health literacy events as part of an ongoing effort with Humana Foundation. Over the last year, approximately 400 families used the resources at the events and also in their homes. This successful program promotes an interactive learning model that engages families to work together and to foster intergenerational dialogues about health, nutrition, and literacy. Children and families participating in the program learn to take ownership of their daily habits in order to create better behaviors over the long-term.

And, NCFL’s approach is working: more than 94 percent of parent participants reported that they are more likely to establish or improve daily routines to include healthy habits such as exercising, increasing water intake, and eating meals and snacks with less sugar.

Next year, this program will be scaled across multiple states and diverse settings to replicate the early success achieved in Kentucky. The overall result of these efforts is a scalable health literacy model that effectively engages families in improving their health and literacy practices together.
NCFL and U.S. Department of Education
Advance Family Engagement

In the spring of 2013, NCFL and the U.S. Department of Education announced a partnership to advance family engagement in education across the country.

The partnership extends the Department of Education’s efforts on family engagement and bolsters NCFL’s extensive history of providing tools and resources for educators and parents to create engaging lifelong learning opportunities for the entire family.

As the Department of Education’s exclusive partner on family engagement, NCFL is working to develop and implement strategies to raise the awareness and understanding of effective family and community engagement in education. These efforts will include exploring how teachers and families can better collaborate to improve student engagement and learning by:

• Convening community discussions on family engagement with educators, families, and civic leaders across the country;
• Identifying and compiling promising practices and program examples for effective family engagement in education so schools can employ leading practices that work;
• Gathering feedback on family engagement frameworks from educators, parents, advocates, and others in the education community; and
• Developing and disseminating resource materials to support family and community engagement in education.

In fiscal year 2013, NCFL and the U.S. Department of Education held joint community events related to this new partnership in San Antonio, Orlando, and Louisville.
College and Career Readiness: *En Camino*

Family literacy continues to be a key gateway to post-secondary education, particularly for Hispanic-Latino and other immigrant populations that may endure struggles within the U.S. higher education system. An important component to that gateway is MetLife Foundation’s *Family Literacy – Community College Partnership Initiative*, which includes the popular *En Camino* materials.

To build on this body of work, NCFL partnered with three of its previous *En Camino* grantees to create materials that supplement the *En Camino* content and enhance the platform. These resources will expand the work of preparing teachers and families for college and career readiness, Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and the new GED® that will debut in 2014. NCFL guided the development of these products as well as planned for a new Issue Brief, multi-media tool, and other materials that help staff and parents understand and work with their students to adapt to the CCSS.

Adelante Mujeres in Oregon developed a series of supplemental workshops with accompanying activities and videos that can be used on their own or in conjunction with the existing *En Camino* modules.

In New York, LaGuardia Community College created a “Teach In” event to assist instructors at community-based organizations in advising their students about college planning and post-secondary transitions into the local community college system.

Sociedad Latina in Massachusetts created a 15-minute video that helps outline what it takes to explore, research, and go to college.
NCFL Bridges Research Gap on Hispanic-Latino Families and Digital Technologies

Building on last year’s groundbreaking Hispanic-Latino Families and Digital Technologies Forum, NCFL released a formal report with partners Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop and the National Council of La Raza. It included recommendations and white papers from the three organizations as well as other leading scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and philanthropic leaders on how Hispanic-Latino families use technology and how to better leverage that technology for learning.

The group reconvened in the spring, adopted the name Aprendiendo Juntos Council, and set priorities for future work:

- How to identify essential developmental priorities for Hispanic-Latino families;
- How digital media can support school readiness and academic success; and
- How family members contribute to learning and technology usage.

The Council is conducting research to identify current motivations behind selecting low-cost broadband access among Hispanic-Latino families as well as identifying their usage behavior once they obtain access.
NCFL Achieves a Successful Model for Early Childhood Education

One of the biggest questions in the education debate today is how to achieve high-quality preschool—a model that is successful with all populations, including children of low-income, at-risk demographics.

NCFL has a proven model for success that communities across the country can implement to strengthen their preschool programs using a high-quality early childhood education approach with a robust parent involvement component.

*CIRCLE: A Developmentally Balanced Preschool Approach* focuses on language and literacy development as well as culture. This intergenerational approach to learning is helping American Indian families break the cycle of low literacy and poverty through the Family and Child Education (FACE) program, a partnership between NCFL and the Bureau of Indian Education.

The most recent results from FACE are consistent with previous years:

- A majority of FACE preschoolers who attended for the full year moved from the 30th national percentile rank to the 55th national percentile rank, making them more competitive at the national level with other preschoolers.
- After a year of FACE, preschool children with special needs scored near the national average, lowering the need for costly, long-term special education accommodations.
- Children enter FACE preschool scoring far below the national average in language development but leave the preschool with significant and meaningful increases in language development.
- Children in FACE attend preschool at higher rates than their non-FACE peers. The higher preschool children’s attendance rates are, the greater their gains in language development and vocabulary.
FACE Opens Door of Opportunity for Kewanyama Family

Before starting the Family and Child Education (FACE) program, 25-year-old Joshua Kewanyama says he used to sit around and do nothing other than wonder if opportunity was going to knock at the door.

Opportunity did come, but it was in the form of a simple question from his wife asking him to go to school with their daughter in the FACE program.

The experience has opened many doors for the family.

Through the FACE program, Joshua enrolled in his first college course, which he took online. Not only did he pass, he received an A+.

Within a few short months, he saw an improvement in his 3-year-old daughter’s ability to learn—from improving her vocabulary and counting to singing nursery rhymes and talking in long, complete sentences.

“This program has also taught me a lot about parenting skills and how to interact with my children,” Joshua says. “The activities we do have helped me tremendously in making me a positive role model for my children and the people around me. There are exercises that have helped me build up my self-confidence and sharpened my ability to make better decisions as a parent.”

“It also taught me a lot about coping with problems in life and how to overcome any obstacles that have been thrown at me.”
Toyota Partnership Sustains and Grows

This year marked the 10-year anniversary of the Toyota Family Literacy Program (TFLP) as well as the announcement of an exciting new initiative. As part of this milestone, NCFL engaged a third-party evaluator, whose findings affirmed that sustained participation by parents positively impacts children’s overall academic achievement. In all seven research cities, children of TFLP parents outperformed a comparison group of children whose parents were not involved in the TFLP on state assessment instruments, language acquisition assessments, developmental reading assessments, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and school system reporting devices, as named by research cities. The survey also unearthed positive effects of TFLP programs in these select research cities:

- In Denver, significantly more children of TFLP parents scored proficient on the state test as compared to nonparticipating families.
- In Long Beach Unified School District, TFLP students enrolled in the third grade outperformed their school peers and met the district average.
- In Mesa Public Schools, kindergarten and first grade students of families participating in the TFLP demonstrated the strongest DIBELS results.
- In Miami-Dade Public Schools, 68 percent of students in the TFLP were on the honor roll and 72 percent had perfect attendance.
- In Shelby County Alabama Public Schools, 47 percent of TFLP students scored proficient in language acquisition compared to only 23 percent of nonparticipating students.

The significant impact of our experience supporting families in education drives NCFL forward to continue finding new ways for all families to benefit from these proven strategies. Toyota Family Learning is the next evolution of our longstanding partnership, and it will be a nationwide initiative to engage families in learning online, offline, and on the go. Launching in fall 2013, it will become a modern-day movement for families learning together, and a harbinger for families mentoring other families to learn and achieve together.
TFLP Helps Maldonado Family Achieve Dreams

When the Maldonado family moved to the United States from Mexico, they lived in a garage. They covered up the holes to keep out the cold and the mice. There was no bed—just a mattress on the floor for parents Lupe and Ismael and baby Jose. But all of this was preferable to the poverty they had left behind.

“It was many years ago that Jose walked into an American classroom for the first time,” Lupe said. “And every day, I stood at the big gate outside the elementary school that divided me from my son. I never left that gate until he was released from school. That was OK because Jose was in an American school and another one of my dreams had come true. But every day, I stood at the gate, not speaking a word of English and knowing no one.”

The principal of Meyler Street Elementary School invited her in, and there the seed was planted for the birth of Meyler Adult and Family Learning Center. Lupe was so involved in the program that she became known as the mother of family literacy at Meyler, a school involved with the Toyota Family Literacy Program. Lupe is currently working and pursuing her high school diploma.

Now grown up, the oldest son Jose graduated from California State University Long Beach. He speaks several languages, including Japanese. Younger son Diego, who was in the National Honor Society at his high school, will start college this fall and major in architecture.

“As you can imagine, Ismael and I are so very proud of our boys,” Lupe says. “We will always remember and be grateful for the big gate of the world that opened to us at Meyler and to others who followed our family’s pioneering spirit.”

“We now own our own home with our own garage across the street from Meyler School, and we are grateful to be near enough to be of service to the school and our community.”
NCFL Develops Robust Learning Resources Aligned to Common Core State Standards

NCFL is taking a leadership role among its network of families and school-aged and adult educators so our networks can thrive amidst the transition to Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The shifts in instruction required by the CCSS are among the biggest in recent decades—teachers have an urgent and real need for understanding and implementing them so students can succeed under the new expectations. Families are facing the same adjustments and are understandably confused by what the changes mean for their education.

NCFL’s Wonderopolis® platform provides a free and easy application for solving one of the biggest paradigm shifts required by the new standards—the ability for students to understand and apply critical thinking skills to informational texts. Teachers of all disciplines must meet the expectation of supplying and instructing their students with high-quality and diverse informational text, and the Wonders of the Day® are equipping teachers with fresh and engaging daily doses. In 2013, NCFL began a partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that will provide innovative ways to support implementation of CCSS among NCFL’s robust Wonderopolis community of teachers and families.

The instructional shifts affect adult students as well—the new GED® test making its debut in 2014 is aligned to CCSS. Students and teachers are clamoring for resources to support this change. NCFL has responded to our networks with agility by developing a series of online courses to support the move to CCSS. The courses are designed to provide an introduction for teachers to comprehend the standards as well as prepare them for implementation. In 2013, NCFL developed and facilitated six CCSS-focused courses; assessments showed that participants increased their knowledge and understanding of the standards after completing the courses.

By leading students, parents, and teachers to work together towards shared understanding and goals around CCSS, NCFL positively impacts our national education system and workforce.
22nd National Conference on Family Literacy

The National Conference on Family Literacy showcased the variety of ways NCFL leverages the power of the family and engages people’s innate sense of wonder to ignite a lifelong love of learning.

This year’s conference had something for everyone, including a world-class list of speakers featuring best-selling author James Patterson as the keynote. Patterson is well-known for his suspenseful and thrilling novels, but he is also an advocate for increasing reading among children, an issue he promotes through his nonprofit organization, Read Kiddo Read. Patterson left attendees energized and inspired to reach new heights in their own work.

The conference agenda also included EepyBird, creator of the Mentos and Diet Coke viral videos that have been viewed by more than 150 million people. The dynamic duo conducted live learning experiments that underlined the same values of wonder and curiosity upon which NCFL’s Wonderopolis® was founded.

Speakers shared high quality content during in-depth sessions on relevant education topics including: Common Core State Standards, parent engagement, and blended learning. And, as always, attendees absorbed the latest research uncovered by a line-up of top national education experts including: Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D.; Oscar Barbarin, Ph.D.; Vikki Katz, Ph.D.; and Rosario Ordoñez-Jasis, Ph.D.

National social media expert and best-selling author C.C. Chapman provided inspiring and invigorating remarks during the closing brunch. The 22nd annual conference marked the first time that NCFL partnered to present the conference with Literacy Powerline, an organization that supports literacy coalitions across the country.

Creating the First News Curation for Family Learning

NCFL is leading the way to implement an unmet need among family learning-focused professionals. “Families and Learning NOW” is a weekly emailed news curation for family and literacy learning practitioners, educators, school administrators, and advocates of families learning together. Each edition includes information on family learning and engagement, resources, best practices, and research in the field, as well as relevant grants and professional development opportunities. The first issue of the aggregator was published in summer 2013. Funding support for this tool came from longtime partner, the Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy at Penn State University.
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# Financial Information

## July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

## Income

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Federal and state grants</td>
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## Expenditures

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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## Change in net assets

- **$473,892**

## Net assets end of year

- **$14,137,698**
We exist to create a culture of family engagement across the educational spectrum, bridging resources and creating solutions that work for today’s families.