

FAST Learning & Support Services



2017 Annual Report



Welcome

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the UIC Center for Literacy, we invite you to learn about our 2017 Family Start (FAST) Learning & Support Service programs. In collaboration with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, FAST strives to empower Chicago Early Learning families by providing access to high quality, research-based programs that support the Head Start Performance Standards and are aligned with the national Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework.

We are very proud of our staff, AmeriCorps members, and community volunteers who are committed to supporting parents' progress, step by step, toward achieving their personal and family goals. However, we are most proud of the persistence demonstrated each day, in every class or workshop, by our Chicago Early Learning parents themselves as they transition to adult lifelong learners ready to model the importance of education and taking advantage of everyday learning opportunities with their children.

Today we celebrate our 2017 successes, highlighted in this Annual Report, while also planning next steps to address challenges and develop a continuous quality improvement plan to assure success in 2018.

Together with the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services, we look forward to continuing our support of Chicago Early Learning families.



Ruby Camacho
Associate Director



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Program Evaluation Coordinator



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Introduction

FAST, a division of the UIC Center for Literacy, empowers and strengthens Early Learning families in Chicago. Together with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, we are committed to developing and implementing research-based programs that align with the Head Start Performance Standard 1302 Subpart E, family and community engagement and the national Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework.

Following are our key program components:

- Adult Education & Career Transition
- Parent & Youth Outreach
- Parent Resource
- Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delay

The development of each of these FAST programs is based upon the knowledge that engaging parents in meaningful education, training, and advancement opportunities directly impacts their children as well. In addition to the extensive research that supports parent's education as a significant predictor of children's academic achievement, parent unemployment with the associated economic and psychological stress can have long-lasting adverse effects on children's development as well.

Collaboration, in addition to our primary DFSS partnership, has been essential to our 2017 program success. Resources provided by the Corporation for National & Community Service, the Illinois Community College Board, and The Autism Program of Illinois contributed to program expansion and enhanced services to Chicago Early Learning Families.

Specific highlights and accomplishments for each program component are shared in this 2017 Annual Report. Please note that the use of the term parents in this report and all FAST program descriptions refers also to other primary caregivers including grandparents or other adult family members and even older siblings who interact with younger children.

OUR VISION:
Break the cycle of poverty and collectively strengthen communities through family learning services.

OUR MISSION:
Provide families with access to high quality, research-based learning opportunities in collaboration with the Chicago DFSS and other community-based organizations.

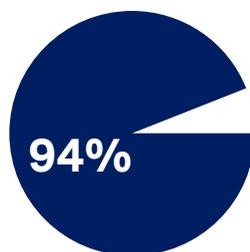
OUR CORE BELIEF:
All Chicago Early Learning families are entitled to equitable access to FAST.



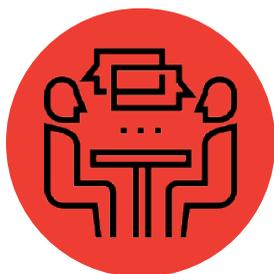
Program Impact



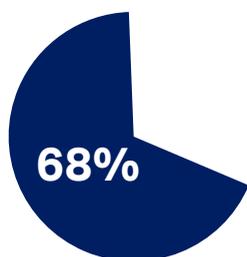
37 Adult Education students completed their High School Equivalency



94% of Parent Outreach workshop participants increased knowledge on post workshop assessments



1,123 families received personalized resources to support children with developmental delays



68% of Adult Education students made gains on standardized assessments



2,357 children received summer literacy instruction



671

Trainings
Delivered

734

Educators
Served

2,680

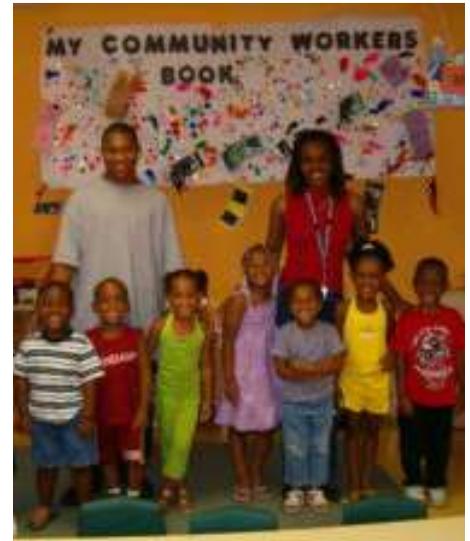
Families
Served

Engaging Parents, Families, & Communities

The FAST programs recognize meaningful impact is dependent upon focusing on the Chicago Early Learning families as a unit. Only by actively engaging parents and developing community resources can the primary PFCE goal of supporting family well-being and building stronger relationships between parents and children be achieved in a way that impacts learning and development for both parents and children. Therefore, each of the FAST key programs strive to engage participants not only as adult learners but also as parents of young children.

For example:

- When parents in a high school equivalency credential (HSE) class are learning research-based reading comprehension strategies, they are also guided in ways to practice those strategies when reading to their children.
- Adult English language learners collaborate to plan family field trips that take them and their children beyond their immediate community to explore Chicago venues like the Kohl's Children's Museum at Navy Pier.
- Financial Literacy workshop participants learn the basics of creating a family budget while also learning ways to engage their children by playing games that develop an understanding of family needs versus family wants.
- Parents of children with special needs access resources at the Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays that allow them to create activities to use at home and receive appropriate referrals to community resources.



Our approach is always to design programs that address the needs and goals of the adult family members while also focusing on the adult's role as a parent who impacts the growth and development of children. By engaging parents in programs that acknowledge the importance of such intergenerational learning and by continually seeking out partnerships to enhance community resources, the FAST programs support the whole Chicago Early Learning family.

FAST Program Connections to PFCE Framework

- | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Adult Education | ➔ | Families as Learners; Engage in Transitions; Connections to Community; Advocates & Leaders |
| Parent Outreach | ➔ | Family Well Being; Positive Parent-Child Relations; Lifelong Learning |
| Parent Resource | ➔ | Family Well Being; Engage in Transition; Connection to Community |
| RCADD | ➔ | Positive Parent-Child Relations; Engage in Transitions; Connection to Community; Advocates & Leaders |

Adult Education & Career Transition

Overview:

Parents with higher levels of education are better able to support early childhood learning and development. Further, improving parent education leads to increased employability and economic self-sufficiency. The Adult Education program provides direct services and referrals to Chicago Early Learning parents in order to strengthen and support their educational development. We prioritize direct-service to Chicago's south, southwest, and west sides where there is a lack of adult education and career transition opportunities. Classes at our sites help parents strengthen their language, literacy, and numeracy skills, obtain a High School Equivalency credential (HSE) in English or Spanish, and begin to build a career pathway.

Accomplishments:

- 421 individuals took HSE or ESL classes:
 - 37 students completed their HSE credential
 - 77% of students met an academic goal
 - 68% of adult learners made gains on standardized assessments.
- Created two new ESL computer labs.
- Two student cohorts completed the Community Organizing and Family Issues leadership training.
- Awarded a new grant to expand our competency-based adult education and career transition program.
- Presented our alternative high school equivalency model, Generation Rise Adult Diploma (GRAD), to statewide competency-based HSE Task Force.



“FAST has taught me how to believe in myself.”
Gloria S., FAST Adult Education student

“For me the English classes are very important because they helped me a lot. Now I am more independent; I can go to the store and buy what I need because I can communicate more with people.”
Maria M., FAST Adult Education student

Next Steps

Adult Education and Career Transition had many successes this year. In order to ensure graduates of our program successfully transition into employment and post secondary educational opportunities, we will hire a career transition specialist and case manager. We will expand our social services support to our students by incorporating communities of practice cohorts led by members of our Parent Resource team. Further, we will focus on recruiting new students to broaden our reach and impact.

Parent Outreach

Overview:

The Parent Outreach team engages parents at Chicago Early Learning sites in self-enhancement workshops including financial management, pre-employment planning, and opportunities to transition to local Career Bridge programs. In addition, family literacy programs introduce home literacy activities that support children's early cognitive development and positive emotional growth. The Dad's Reading Daily workshops provide specific support and encourage dads to be involved in their children's education. All families – parents and children – are invited to special events throughout the year.

Accomplishments:

624 workshops presented all over Chicago:
3,744 parent participants
94% demonstrated learning gains
39% participated in multiple workshops.

Initiated new male involvement outreach events that nearly doubled the number of men involved with literacy programming over last year.

Collaborated with the Chicago Parent Policy Council to facilitate the *Speaking in Public* training to support Chicago Early Learning parents with their public speaking skills.

Implemented the updated *All My Money* research-based financial literacy curriculum at our Chicago Early Learning partner sites.



“I really like attending the father’s workshop because it focuses on how we men can also teach our children and make it fun for them. Can’t wait for our next workshop and see what else I will be able to bring home and teach my son”

Juan C., Workshop participant

Next Steps

Parent Outreach exceeded all deliverable and quantifiable results in this program year. As we enter 2018, Parent Outreach will update its family literacy workshop curriculum with a focus on incorporating more technology and introducing more interactive activities for participants. Additionally, we plan to pilot workshop cohorts at several of our key sites. As a part of these cohorts, parents will participate in a series of workshops over a number of weeks that will build knowledge and reinforce their newly acquired skills.

Parent Resource

Overview:

The Parent Resource programs provide dynamic and responsive support for Chicago Early Learning site staff who have an essential role in assuring positive outcomes for families. Utilizing a strength-based approach, the Parent Resource team facilitates communities of practice, which have proven to be successful peer support groups for Family Service Workers and other program staff. The team also conducts city-wide trainings and provides technical assistance to support site level data management. Parents, families, and programs benefit when site staff maximize efficacy by developing knowledge and skills to build positive relationships, develop strong partnership agreements, set SMART goals, and implement a comprehensive referral process.

Accomplishments:

Led 15 professional development trainings open to all Chicago Early Learning staff.

Provided site based technical assistance to 68 Chicago Early Learning sites.

83% of participants indicated development of job related skills as a result of communities of practice participation.

35 Chicago Public School Parent Resource Assistants received training in writing effective case notes.

Facilitated *Rounding the Bases to Transitioning: Creating My Playbook* workshop at the Chicago Early Learning Parent Conference.

Implemented a web based version of the **SMART Goal Setting** workshop to provide alternate learning opportunities for FSWs.



“Participating in the Communities of Practice has improved my professional practice by helping me relate more positively with my families and to advocate for them.”

Family Service Worker,
Parent Resource Participant

Next Steps

In 2018, the Parent Resource team will transition to provide direct service to parents. Plans are underway to replicate the successful communities of practice developed with Family Service Workers this year. We will now engage parents in this strength-based approach to setting goals and making progress towards parents' education and career transition plans. With the Parent Resource team's expertise and social service background, we are excited to now offer these successful programs directly to Chicago Early Learning parents and families.

Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays

Overview:

The Resource Center for Autism & Developmental Delays (RCADD) provides a rich collection of resources, trainings, referrals, and consultations by educational specialists. These services 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.

Accomplishments:

1,941 resource room visits that led to:
1,123 individual consultations
1,803 materials checked out
32% of patrons made 3+ visits within the year.

Provided special trainings and tours to staff members from El Valor, Chicago Common, RUSH AARTS, Easter Seals, Chicago Public Schools, SGA Youth & Family Services, and other community partners.

Planned and conducted this year's A Day of Recognition Event/ADORE.

Developed new workshops including: *Visual Supports for Social Emotional Learning in the Classroom* and *Boardmaker 101*.

Presented *Building Literacy Skills in Children with Autism* at the National Center for Family Learning Conference.



"I think that this place is a great resource for teachers and parents to help foster special needs student learning. I love coming here."
Anonymous, RCADD patron

Next Steps

RCADD exceeded all projected deliverable and quantifiable results in spite of having to close the southside location for several months to address necessary renovations. With both locations fully operational, the staff looks forward to expanding services in 2018 while also continuing to strategize ways to serve northside sites.

Teen Summer Program

Overview:

During summer months, Parent Outreach engages in One Summer Chicago to support families by placing teens at Chicago Early Learning sites to provide programming for children. This program offers employment opportunities for 200+ teens from Chicago Early Learning families. These teens serve as Literacy Coaches working as assistants in classrooms and providing reading enrichment activities for young children. The Outreach program also partners with the Chicago Housing Authority to offer a Safe Summer Peace Ambassador program, in which 30+ youth facilitate restorative justice programming with elementary-aged children. During the summer, Teen Literacy Coaches and Safe Summer Ambassadors develop independence and self-efficacy skills and are provided information about continuing on educational and career paths.

Accomplishments:

240 teens provided 20,496 hours of literacy activities for:

- 2,357 Chicago Early Learning children
- 47 Early learning sites.

92% of teens reported improved leadership skills as a result of the program.

96% of participating community partners indicated that teens had a positive effect on their programs.

50% of teens completed the optional **Be Pay Day Ready** digital badge, which focused on developing basic knowledge of financial literacy principles and practices.

Integrated **Boss Your Life**, a research-based youth development curriculum that focuses on building life skills for youth.



Next Steps

Looking towards the summer of 2018, we will continue collaboration with DFSS on all One Summer Chicago teen initiatives. We look forward to serving even more teens and their families through these exciting opportunities.

AmeriCorps Project MORE

Overview:

AmeriCorps Project MORE, a partnership with the Corporation for National & Community Service supports 20+ AmeriCorps National Service Volunteers assigned to our FAST programs. Through volunteerism, MORE strives to build a lifelong ethic of service to better serve communities and positively transform lives. Our MORE members support parent engagement activities that promote economic opportunity for Chicago Early Learning parents through tutoring, facilitating workshops, providing resources, and coordinating service projects. In addition, our Project MORE management team actively recruits new AmeriCorps volunteers from the Chicago Early Learning partner sites and local communities served by FAST.



Accomplishments:

This year 23 AmeriCorps members provided:
20,825 hours of direct service
1,242 hours of special service.

Coordinated donation drive and volunteer recruitment to provide literacy activities at seven Chicago area homeless shelters for Martin Luther King Day of Service.

Prepared 80 care packages for veterans at Veteran's Day of Service.

Hosted a career and education fair for current members and program alumni.

Four members were accepted into and enrolled in college.



2017 AmeriCorps

Program of the Year

as recognized by Serve Illinois



Community Engagement

Overview:

Through community engagement, the FAST team promotes collaboration among all stakeholders including Chicago Early Learning families, the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, the UIC Center for Literacy, Chicago Early Learning programs, Community Partners (COFI, Literacy Volunteers of IL, Literacy Works), and supplemental funders (Illinois Community College Board, Corporation for National and Community Service, The Autism Program). By promoting reciprocal communication and inter-agency collaboration, Chicago Early Learning families have access to resources beyond what any single partner could provide.



Through effective community engagement, FAST partnered with

232

Chicago Early Learning sites



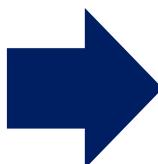
Next Steps

Early learning sites have evolving needs, as do the parents they engage. FAST is determined to strengthen and improve our outreach to early learning sites and to remain abreast of shifts in need. Moving into 2018, FAST will continue outreach surveys, formative assessment, in-person outreach, social media campaigns, and work on smartphone and other innovative outreach where appropriate. We will continue to remain committed to the service of Chicago Early Learning programs across the city.

Special Events

Throughout the year, FAST Learning & Support Services take part in many events as presenters, support staff, and volunteers. These events present us with the opportunity to disseminate information and engage our community. Below are major events that we participated in this year.

Martin Luther King
Day of Service
January 16



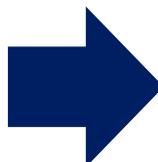
Served **100+** homeless
children through literacy
activities

LVI On the Road to
Literacy Conference
April 8



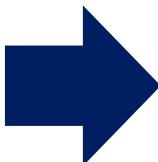
Served **200+** adult learners
and adult education staff with
learning activities

High School
Graduation Ceremony
July 14



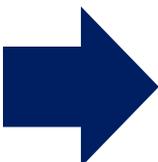
37 adult learners were
recognized for completing
their high school equivalency

Look What Parents
Can Do Conference
August, 4



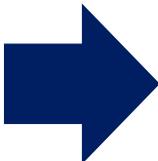
700+ parents from across
Chicago attended this annual
conference

National Center for Family
Learning Conference
October 9



RCADD presented activities
to help support children with
developmental delays

Teachers for Social Justice
Curriculum Fair
November, 18

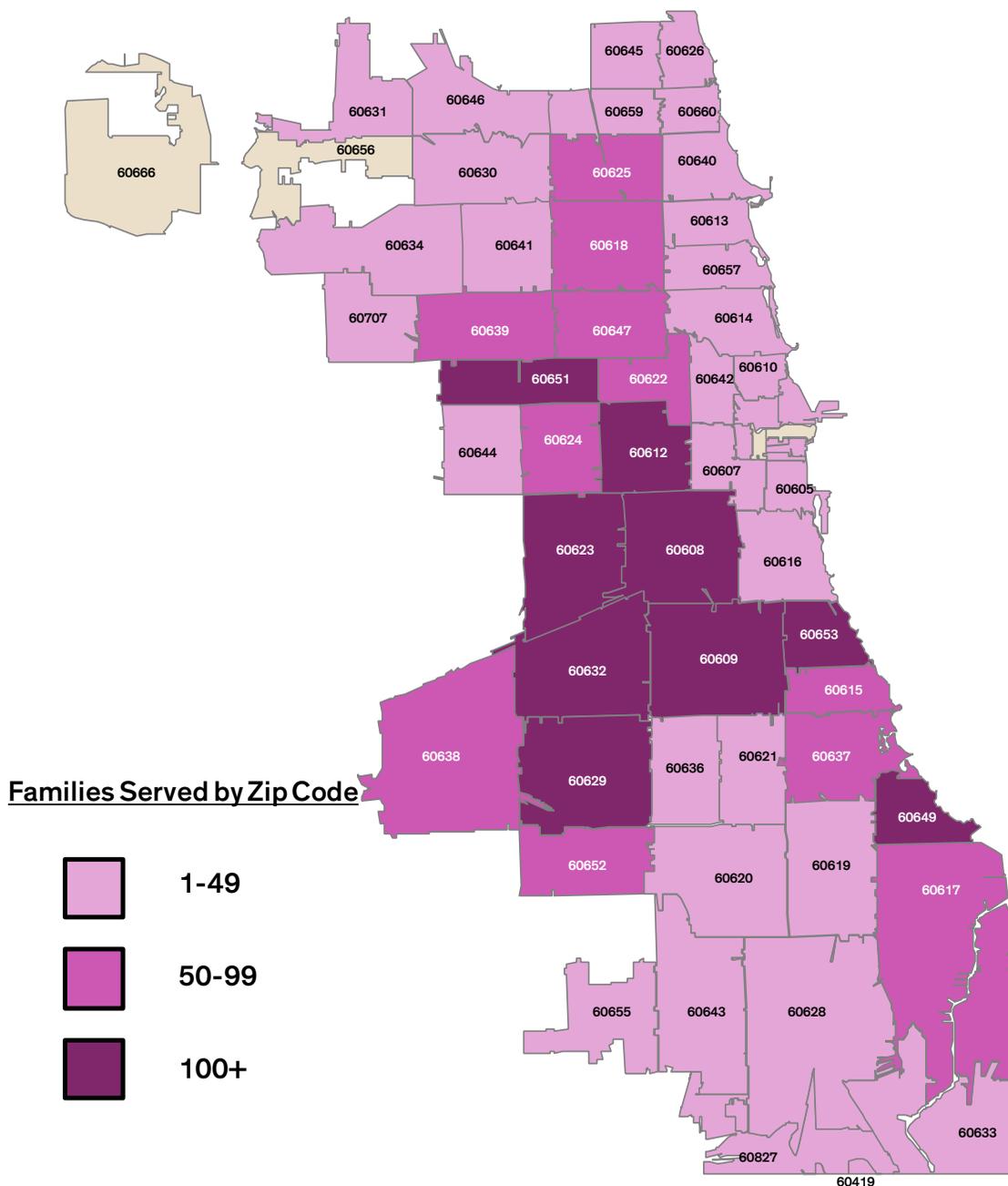


FAST students presented
their work to teachers from all
over Chicago



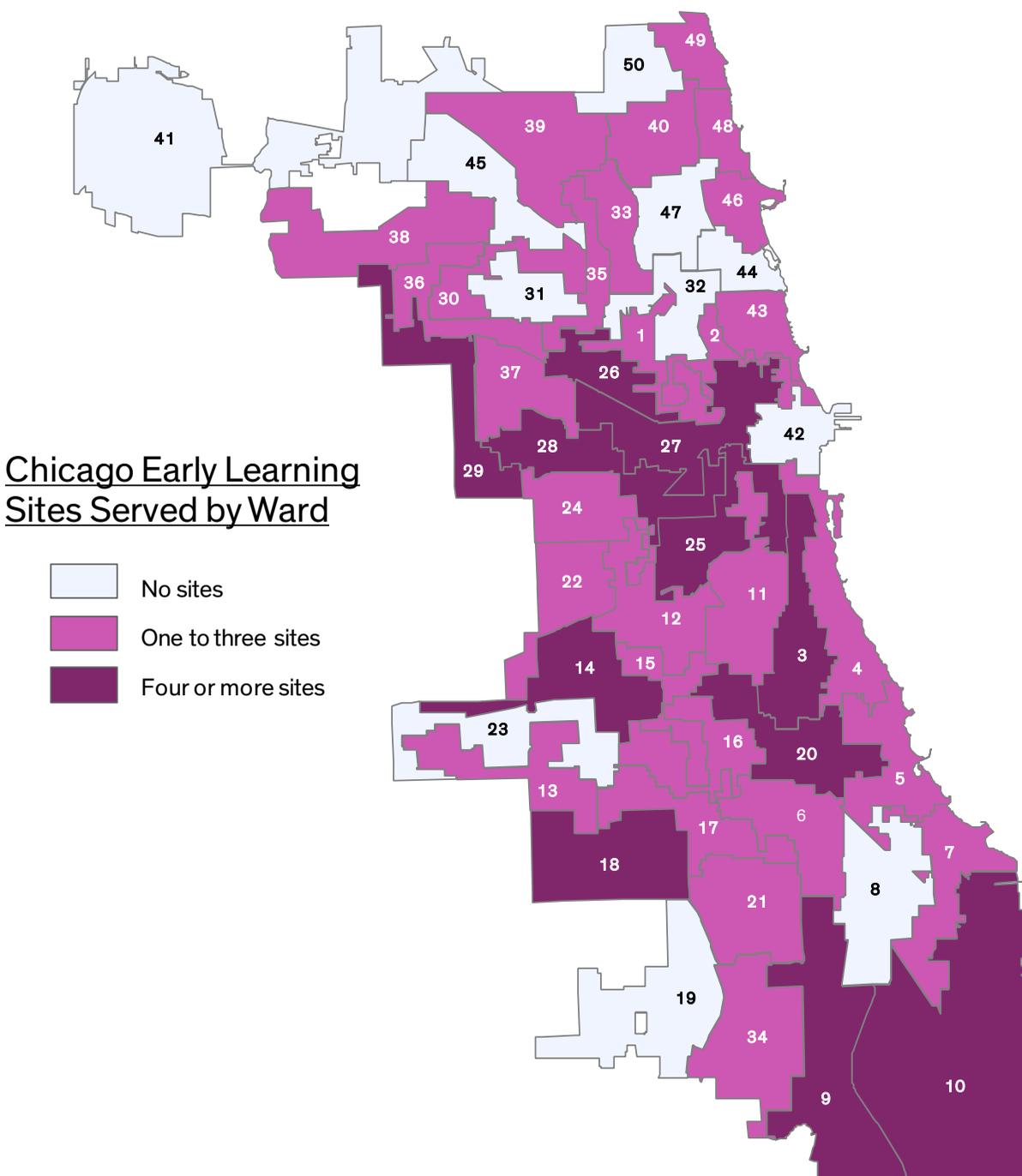
ZIP Codes Served

FAST engaged parents from 56 Chicago zip codes while ensuring a focus on providing learning and support opportunities to families in neighborhoods where there are typically minimal literacy program resources. Our hub sites are located in the Back of the Yards, Bronzeville, and Garfield Park neighborhoods, enabling us to meet and serve low-income parents in the communities where they reside and where they are near their Chicago Early Learning program site.



Wards Served

FAST supported the Family and Community Partnership efforts of DFSS by providing families with learning and support services in 78% (39 of 50) Chicago wards. In these cases, FAST staff members traveled to the Chicago Early Learning sites to provide parents with employment-readiness, family literacy and financial literacy workshops. Additionally, they provided mini-conferences and special events like Dads Reading Daily, Money Smart Week, and Money Bonanza. They also traveled to sites to provide professionals with individualized consultations and in-service trainings related to family service delivery. We successfully served sites across the city, focusing on the highest needs areas of the south, southwest, and west sides.



Looking Forward

As we enter 2018, we are excited to explore new opportunities, diversify our programming and reach more families than ever before. As we look forward to improving our outcomes, our new goals include:

- Increase visibility of our programs through increased social media presence and special events.
- Expand competency based high school credential.
- Develop parent learning cohorts to assure effective transitions to career and post secondary educational opportunities.
- Conduct impact studies to further demonstrate the positive effects of our program on participants.
- Seek new community partners to strengthen our network of resources for parents.
- Expand opportunities for Chicago Early Learning families.



Conclusion

2017 has been an incredible year with a few challenges and countless successes. We are very grateful for the continued support of all of our partner organizations. Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our FAST Learning & Support Services program.



Fiscal Year 2016-2017

Family Start Learning & Support Services

2017 Annual Report

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