



# Acelero Learning

## ANNUAL REPORT



**2021  
2022**



## **A LETTER FROM THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, ACELERO LEARNING HEAD START**

Dear Acelero Learning Staff, Partners,  
and Friends,

The 2021-22 academic year was a time of transition – and a time to reset and reopen. During this time of transition and reopening, we celebrated successes while also managing challenges. Although things may have felt and even looked different, our schools were all fully open and our enrollment was higher than the previous year.

It was also a time of transition in our organization. We dedicated significant time and resources to redesigning our stated mission, vision, and values to better reflect our priorities as an organization. What makes Acelero special is the people, and we were very intentional about including as many people from around our network as possible to ensure voices were heard.

Our team is driven towards our newly stated mission: We design and deliver inclusive, anti-bias, and rigorous approaches to eliminate the gaps between young children’s inherent potential and their achievement in school and life. With our partners, we accelerate child and family outcomes that honor the aspirations and cultures of the communities we serve.

It is not enough to have the best people, we have to maintain the relationships between them. We are driven towards establishing and sustaining working relationships among ourselves as a team as well as the relationships with our students and their families.

We are also driven towards results. We do not take no for an answer when it comes to getting the outcomes our children, families, and staff need and deserve.

Others recognized our results. This summer our Strong Start Academy at Lorenzi in Las Vegas received a visit from Representative Steven Horsford and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who described Acelero as “a model to the nation, a great example of how to meet the needs of children in a way that’s culturally appropriate and gives them self-esteem as they go forward.” I couldn’t say it better myself, but while we appreciate the praise and celebrate our accomplishments, we know we have not yet accomplished those outcomes.

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Part of our pursuit is the use of data to inform our practice. We implement and replicate the most effective practices across our four delegates. We use data to ensure that those things that we are implementing and replicating with fidelity actually have an impact on the children we serve as well as their parents. We make decisions based on the data we collect – being very truthful with ourselves about what can and cannot be accomplished.

We saw during the pandemic that significant gains can be achieved in the face of challenges by using our rigorous approaches combined with Head Start’s comprehensive standards. We were able to support our staff through that time by paying them living wages through supplemental pay provided with federal funds. Unfortunately, as the fiscal year ended, it became clear that we were at yet another moment of transition in the field of early childhood education. We were hopeful we would receive additional financial support from either our state or federal governments to extend the FEARLESS Pay Program, but that has not happened yet. However, we are optimistic that if we continue to amplify our voices and make our challenges known to our funders, they will partner with us in getting all of our staff to living and comparable wages. Ultimately, we want to provide the highest quality of education to the greatest number of children possible.

*Rory Sipp*

**DR. RORY BROWN SIPP**

*Senior Vice President  
Acelero Learning Head Start*



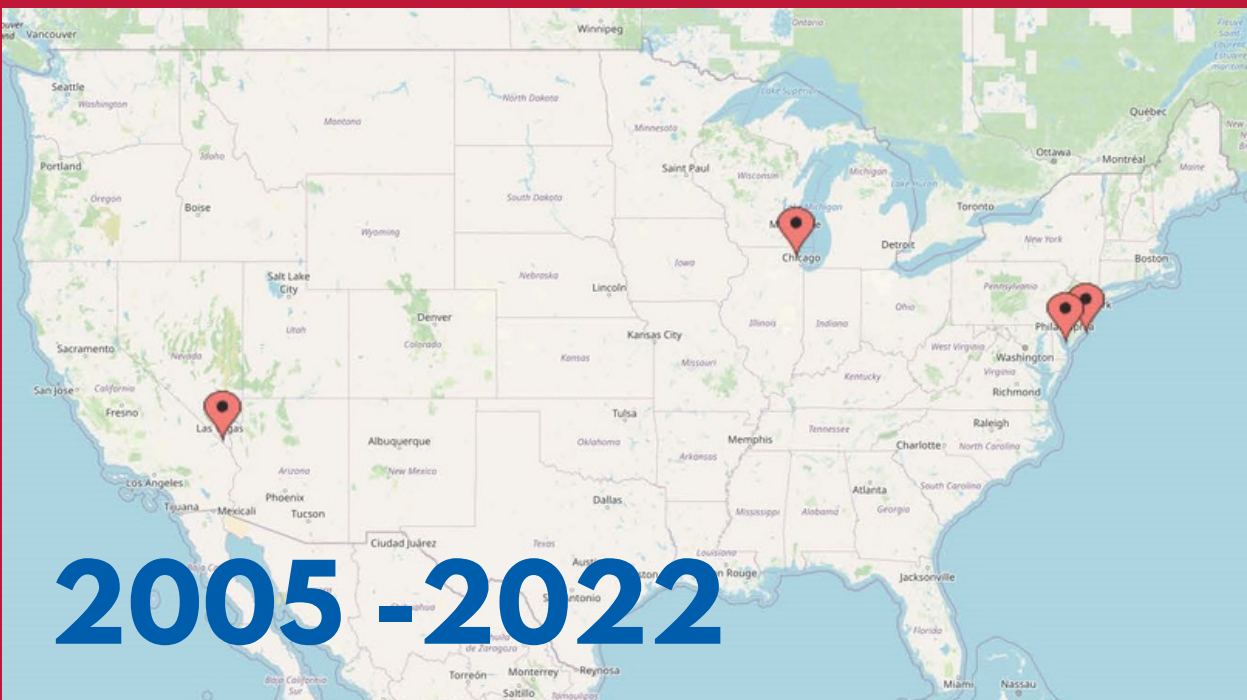
# WHAT IS ACELERO LEARNING? WHO DO WE SERVE?

At Acelero Learning, our vision is a world where children become champions of their own making, where historical biases and systemic inequities no longer stand in the way of their infinite promise. We are a comprehensive early childhood education and care provider that believes quality early education has the power to disrupt injustice. We offer high-quality, equity-centered education programming to more than 5,000 children and their families in 53 centers across New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Nevada, ensuring positive impact across our communities.

We work respectfully with families, learning from each other and focusing together on their children's inherent potential. We deliver innovative and data-backed education services to children from all backgrounds. We apply a two-generation approach to our work, engaging whole families, not just their youngest members.

Acelero's school community builds upon the learning that children experience in their families and communities, and sets the highest educational standards to continue to propel their growth and development. We exist at the intersection of care and innovation, reducing barriers and working with families and communities to see them thrive. We operate within vibrant and diverse communities and strive to honor the aspirations and cultures of the communities we serve. We are proud to share in this Annual Report what that pursuit looked like in 2021-22

**32,041 CHILDREN HEADED TO KINDERGARTEN WITH A HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL EDUCATION**



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# DEDICATED TO SERVING CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN 2021-22

Program Year 2021-22 started with great anticipation that COVID vaccines for adults, and eventually for children, would slow the epidemic and its disruption to business as usual. The reality proved something short of those aspirations, with Coronavirus variants continuing to upend daily operations across our program network, forcing classroom closures for quarantines, and requiring that interactions with families remained, for the most part, virtual or outside in small socially distanced groups. Despite these challenges, as well as national ECE staffing shortages, our programs were able to maintain an average monthly enrollment of 3,440 children, with programs able to serve 5,049 children and 4,545 families during the program year.

As a network, our programs pro-actively advocated for all staff to receive Coronavirus vaccines as soon as they became available – conducting public education campaigns, inviting diverse public health experts to conduct virtual dialogue sessions, and incentivizing vaccination completion. By June 2021, some centers had reached 70-80% vaccination rates, while others lagged significantly behind. With the new program year approaching and a desire to do everything possible to reduce disruptions to in-person learning, senior leadership carefully weighed how to increase vaccination rates across all centers. With input from both staff and families, the program mandated vaccinations four months prior to the Office of Head Start mandate, allowing our teams to adjust quarantining policies to reduce some of the impact on staffing and increase stability of daily operations in our centers and classrooms.

Our successful remote home learning model, Shine at Home, utilized during pandemic operations, had provided us with the opportunity to broaden the ways we engaged families and challenged us to support families to devise more individualized home learning pathways that worked best for their children and family. As part of our efforts to create more self-directed family engagement opportunities, in the fall of 2021, our teams launched a web-based portal and set of video courses entitled, The Power of PEER, designed to provide families with an introduction to our PEER activity cards and the research and rationale behind their design. Of 384 families who submitted survey data on their experience, 85% shared that they would highly recommend the courses to others and that they intended to utilize PEER interactions frequently with their children.

The pandemic also reaffirmed our desire to identify a national partner to support our efforts to identify and integrate equity-centered two-generation strategies into our family engagement approach. Pandemic relief funds afforded us the opportunity to test integrating the LIFT economic mobility coaching model, a research-based and nationally recognized approach, into our family engagement team's goal partnership work. This pilot will continue into the 2022-23 program year, with hopes to inform our two-generation strategy to support family well-being over the long term.

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# ACELERO LEARNING HEAD START A MODEL TO THE NATION

*“Acelero is a model to the nation, a great example of how to meet the needs of children in a way that’s culturally appropriate and gives them self-esteem as they go forward.”*

*– U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi*



In August of 2022, Acelero Learning’s Strong Start Academy at Lorenzi in Las Vegas hosted a roundtable discussion convened by U.S. Representative Steven Horsford with special guest Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, and included Dr. Michael Maxwell, Vice President Acelero Learning Clark County; Tameka Henry, Board Chair Acelero Learning Clark County; and Ashley Dines, Acelero Policy Committee Chairperson, along with other local leaders.

Panelists discussed barriers to women in the workplace, including the pay gap and lack of affordable early childhood education, particularly for women of color. They also presented possible solutions, ranging from universal pre-K to ensuring living wages for early childhood educators, 90% of whom are women.

Ashley Dines, whose two children attended Acelero Learning schools, serves as chair of the Acelero Policy Committee. “It was really nice to know that people who run the country understand the challenges of working women,” Dines said. According to Dines, without extended day care at the school, she would not have been able to work.

“Acelero has changed the trajectory of my family’s life. Access to high quality education is extremely important to me,” said Dines. “As a working mother, you want your child to go to a quality school and provide for them, but that’s challenging when you can’t afford to provide something that all families deserve.”



# MORE THAN 5,000 CHILDREN ENROLLED ACROSS FOUR STATES

## Number of participants and families served by location

| Center Locations                          | Total number of participants served | Total number of families served |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Clark County Head Start                   | 1603                                | 1424                            |
| Clark County Early Head Start             | 146                                 | 130                             |
| Camden/Philadelphia Head Start            | 506                                 | 464                             |
| Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start      | 78                                  | 27                              |
| Lower North Philadelphia Head Start       | 427                                 | 382                             |
| Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start | 31                                  | 27                              |
| Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start  | 228                                 | 212                             |
| Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS                | 45                                  | 39                              |
| Camden County Head Start                  | 157                                 | 148                             |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start             | 869                                 | 823                             |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start       | 60                                  | 57                              |
| Milwaukee Head Start                      | 312                                 | 289                             |
| Milwaukee Early Head Start                | 128                                 | 114                             |
| Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start            | 124                                 | 108                             |
| Racine Head Start                         | 296                                 | 267                             |
| Racine Early Head Start                   | 39                                  | 34                              |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>5049</b>                         | <b>4545</b>                     |

# MORE THAN 3400 CHILDREN SERVED EVERY DAY IN OUR CENTERS

| Center Locations                          | Average monthly enrollment |
|---|----------------------------|
| Clark County Head Start                   | 1076                       |
| Clark County Early Head Start             | 84                         |
| Camden/Philadelphia Head Start            | 376                        |
| Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start      | 56                         |
| Lower North Philadelphia Head Start       | 282                        |
| Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start | 19                         |
| Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start  | 140                        |
| Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS                | 24                         |
| Camden County Head Start                  | 105                        |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start             | 673                        |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start       | 39                         |
| Milwaukee Head Start                      | 217                        |
| Milwaukee Early Head Start                | 66                         |
| Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start            | 71                         |
| Racine Head Start                         | 189                        |
| Racine Early Head Start                   | 23                         |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>3440</b>                |



| Center Locations                          | Number served who are categorically or income eligible for Head Start | % served who are categorically or income eligible for Head Start |
|---|---|--|
| Clark County Head Start                   | 1387  | 87%  |
| Clark County Early Head Start             | 134   | 92%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia Head Start            | 404   | 80%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start      | 65  | 83%  |
| Lower North Philadelphia Head Start       | 358   | 84%  |
| Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start | 26  | 84%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start  | 206   | 90%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS                | 43  | 96%  |
| Camden County Head Start                  | 120   | 76%  |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start             | 630   | 72%  |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start       | 57  | 95%  |
| Milwaukee Head Start                      | 240   | 77%  |
| Milwaukee Early Head Start                | 115   | 90%  |
| Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start            | 114   | 92%  |
| Racine Head Start                         | 241   | 81%  |
| Racine Early Head Start                   | 36  | 92%  |
| <b>All locations</b>                      | <b>4176</b>   | <b>86%</b>   |

# ACCESS PROVIDED TO MEDICAL & DENTAL EXAMS FOR CHILDREN IN OUR CENTERS

| Center Locations                          | Number of enrolled children who received medical exams | % of enrolled children who received medical exams | Number of enrolled children who received dental exams | % of enrolled children who received dental exams |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Clark County Head Start                   | 963  | 60%   | 1187  | 74%  |
| Clark County Early Head Start             | 92   | 63%   | 118   | 81%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia Head Start            | 200  | 40%   | 335   | 66%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia Early Head Start      | 15   | 19%   | 24  | 31%  |
| Lower North Philadelphia Head Start       | 103  | 24%   | 186   | 44%  |
| Lower North Philadelphia Early Head Start | 15   | 48%   | 24  | 77%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia CCP Early Head Start  | 132  | 58%   | 171   | 75%  |
| Camden/Philadelphia R3 EHS                | 20   | 44%   | 12  | 27%  |
| Camden County Head Start                  | 81   | 52%   | 117   | 75%  |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Head Start             | 637  | 73%   | 724   | 83%  |
| Monmouth/Middlesex Early Head Start       | 49   | 82%   | 53  | 88%  |
| Milwaukee Head Start                      | 184  | 59%   | 247   | 79%  |
| Milwaukee Early Head Start                | 70   | 55%   | 104   | 81%  |
| Wisconsin CCP Early Head Start            | 70   | 56%   | 101   | 81%  |
| Racine Head Start                         | 187  | 63%   | 242   | 82%  |
| Racine Early Head Start                   | 23   | 59%   | 28  | 72%  |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>2841</b>  | <b>53%</b>  | <b>3673</b>   | <b>70%</b>                                       |



# FAMILY & STAFF REFLECTIONS ON THEIR JOURNEYS AT ACELERO LEARNING



## What brought you here and what keeps you here?

"I found the first center in my neighborhood. What keeps me here is the early development and readiness provided by Acelero's teachers and facilitators in preparing my kids for future growth."

Acelero Family Member



"I love working with children, but what keeps me with Acelero are the values and the mission it serves in our community and the impact it creates in the lives of the people that work in the company."

Acelero Staff Member

## What do we do that makes it easier for you to support your child's learning and development?

"The homework assignments are super helpful to know what to teach my children. There is so much information out there that it can be overwhelming to know what to do, but the homework assignments help me narrow that down and be able to teach them."

Acelero Family Member



"In my opinion, the teachers are very well prepared and have the patience that children need. We work as a team, and I really like that."

Acelero Family Member

# PREPARING CHILDREN FOR KINDERGARTEN

During the 2021-2022 program year, we were delighted to fully return to in-person learning in all our delegate locations. Although the success we achieved in our virtual model was notable, returning to in-person learning for a full day and full year enabled us to provide more individualized learning experiences to prepare children for kindergarten.

To support teachers, families, and coaches in their pivotal roles in influencing school readiness for their children, we first focused on ensuring that all were supported to reacclimate to the existing systems and tools that yielded breakthrough child outcomes in the past. Some examples of this included using research-based curricula, providing differentiated coaching to all teachers, and partnering with families on home learning, through the Shine on Families framework.

Once reacclimated to the existing systems and tools, our focus shifted to data-informed learning at all levels. For teachers and families, this included looking at child outcome data and using other knowledge about each child to plan for what school readiness skills required reinforcement and the best ways to achieve these outcomes. For coaches and education leaders, this included analyzing teacher outcome data, mapping this to child outcome data, and parsing out learnings. This is in progress with ongoing support from our research partners at MDRC, and we are excited to learn from the results and continue to improve our efforts and tools to ensure all students are prepared to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond.



# FINANCIALS 2021

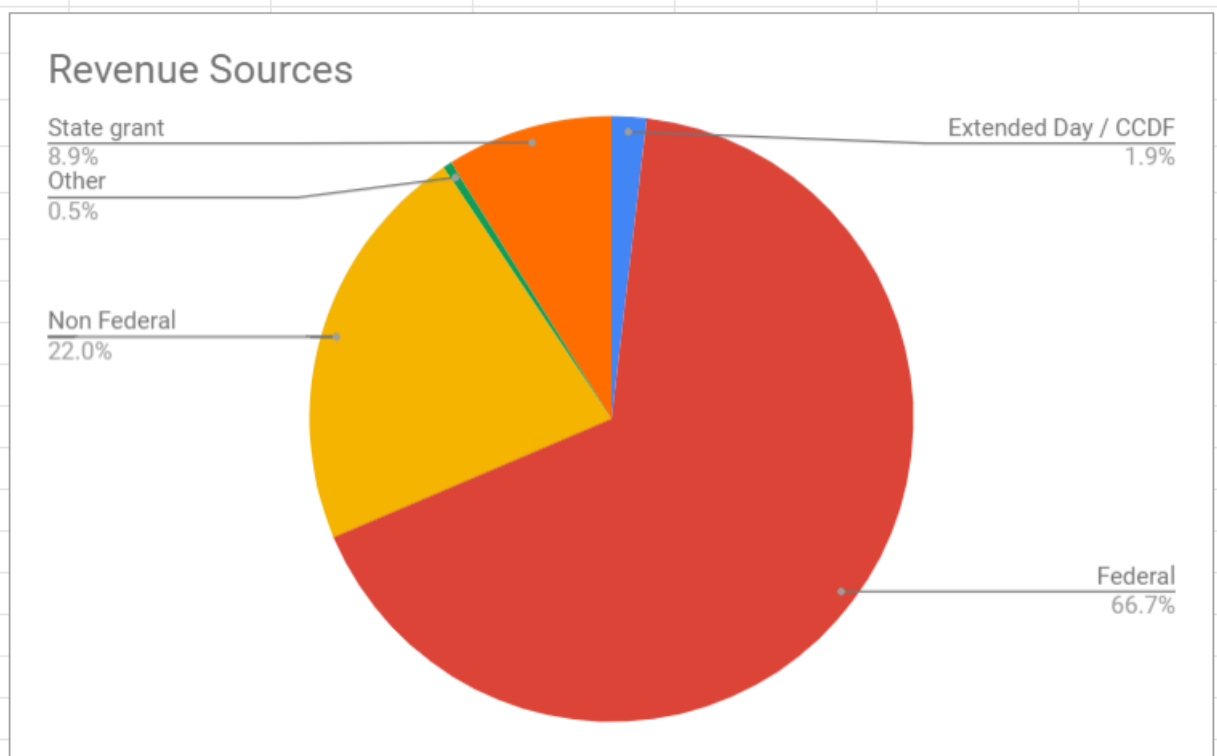
## SOURCES OF REVENUE

The total amount of public and private funds received by source

| Revenue              | 2021 Annual Report   |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Extended Day / CCDF  | \$2,107,139          |
| Federal              | \$75,455,025         |
| Food Program         | \$0                  |
| Non Federal          | \$24,882,782         |
| Other                | \$530,373            |
| State grant          | \$10,083,636         |
| Training             | \$0                  |
| <b>Total Revenue</b> | <b>\$113,058,955</b> |

## BREAKOUT OF REVENUE SOURCES

Percentage breakout of total funds received by source



# HEAD START GRANTEE PROPOSED BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES 2021

| Expenses                  | 2021 Annual Report   | 2021 Budgeted Report |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Salary                    | \$62,607,065         | \$59,100,550         |
| Payroll taxes & Fringe    | \$13,287,630         | \$12,543,412         |
| Contractual               | \$11,558,414         | \$3,254,292          |
| Occupancy                 | \$12,755,626         | \$8,516,166          |
| Supplies                  | \$5,627,695          | \$4,729,281          |
| Food & related supplies   | \$1,659,169          | \$2,787,069          |
| Travel                    | \$1,543,988          | \$1,271,760          |
| Other                     | \$2,418,477          | \$1,087,567          |
| Start-Up                  | \$296,616            | \$351,202            |
| Non-Federal Share         |                      |                      |
| Depreciation/Amortization | \$428,065            | \$453,576            |
| Taxes                     | \$413,528            | \$539,754            |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>     | <b>\$112,596,273</b> | <b>\$94,634,630</b>  |

Acelero, Inc. has completed its annual financial audit for the year ending December 31, 2021 and received an unqualified opinion with no findings. The audit was conducted by Withum Smith & Brown, an audit firm selected by the Board of Directors. The 2021 annual fiscal audit was conducted in the summer of 2022.



# MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES



## Our Vision

**We envision a world where children become champions of their own making; where historical biases and systemic inequities no longer stand in the way of their infinite promise.**

## Our Mission

**We design and deliver inclusive, anti-bias, and rigorous approaches to eliminate the gaps between young children’s inherent potential and their achievement in school and life. With our partners, we accelerate child and family outcomes that honor the aspirations and cultures of the communities we serve.**

## Our Values

- Data-informed Learning**
- Transparent & Open Communication**
- Growth Mindset**
- Dismantling Inequities**
- Caring Teams & Community**



This entire process confirmed my commitment to being a part of an organization that was extremely impactful to me as a parent many years ago and continues to allow me to grow and give back to other children and families on a daily basis.

Susan J, Acelero Learning Head Start, Monmouth/Middlesex



A diverse group of voices were drawn from throughout our company to form a design team and two task forces charged with providing feedback to leadership on important equity considerations. In an effort to both deepen and broaden our impact and prepare to serve more children in innovative ways, the internal design team was charged with reimagining and defining a well-articulated vision, a broader mission statement, and a set of values that underlies and supports both. Launched in October 2021, members of this dedicated, representative team gathered inputs from across the company to help shape decisions surrounding our mission, vision, goals, strategy, and new organizational structure. We were intentional about including people around the network.

Through an inclusive internal process that relied on information collected from staff, parents, and numerous stakeholders, we were able to bring together a rich set of voices from across the entire company, at all levels, representing a diversity of backgrounds. We are excited to share our vision and mission statements, which we believe are both unique to our organization and central to our work.



New Jersey ● Pennsylvania ● Wisconsin ● Nevada

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### **Head Start Governance Advisory Committee**

**Aubrey L. Jones, Esq., Board Chair**

Senior Legal Staffing Consultant, Beacon Hill Staffing Group

**Brian Pauling, CPA, CGMA, CCEP, DCP CFE**

Founder and CEO, Strategic Business Foundations LLC

**Dr. Pamela Brillante, Early Childhood Special Education Expert**

Assistant Professor of Special Education, William Patterson University of New Jersey

**Tameka Henry, Clark County Chair and Former Head Start Parent**

**Vivian Wright-Bolton**

Executive Director, Win-Win Entertainment

**Dr. Earnestine Willis, MD, MPH**

Emeritus Professor in Pediatrics, Medical College of Wisconsin

**Jen Brozoski**

Chief of Career and Technical Education, Freedom Prep Charter Schools in Camden

### **Acelero Learning Head Start Policy Council**

**Ashley Dines, Policy Council Secretary and Policy Council Rep (ALCC)**

**Gloria Grays, Policy Council Chair and Policy Council Rep (ALCC)**

**Brooke Riesterer, Policy Council Rep (ALWI)**

**Regena Allen-Wilson, Policy Council Rep (ALWI)**

**Lakeia Jackson, Policy Council Chair and Policy Council Rep (ALCP)**

**Tanya Gillespie-Lambert, Policy Council Community Rep (ALCP)**

**Judith Fany, Community Rep (ALMM)**

**Jennifer Quinones, Policy Council Alternate (ALMM)**

**Felix Acevedo, Policy Council Rep (ALMM)**



[acelero.net](http://acelero.net)

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