

# Report to Community

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2021



**PROVIDENCE**  
HEALTH • EDUCATION • THERAPY

## OUR Vision

A community where every child is given the opportunity to reach for and achieve their full potential.

## OUR Mission

Working together with the child, family and community, we support the well-being and development of all children.

## OUR Values

**Passion** – We are driven to apply our skills and energy to be the best we can be.

**Respect** – We have respect for each other, for children and families, and for all stakeholders.

**Learning** – We are committed to life-long learning and continuous improvement.

**Leadership** – We are committed to knowledge-sharing, best practices, collaboration and innovation.

## OUR Guiding Principles

- We believe children deserve a joyful, supportive, respectful and safe environment that encourages exploration, learning and growth.
- We believe learning is driven by the child's curiosity and individual readiness.
- We believe in providing inclusive, integrated and engaging environments so all children have the same opportunities and experiences.
- We believe in the primary role of the family in the child's life. We recognize and support the right and responsibility of parents to share in the decision-making process for their children. We have knowledge and appreciation of family, social and cultural practices and traditions.
- We believe quality services are founded on valued, highly professional staff, and commit to the ongoing development of our staff.
- We believe in enhancing the capabilities of adults to achieve significant outcomes for the children in their care. We believe in knowledge-sharing across the early childhood development sector and engaging the community at large in supporting the developmental needs of children and building resiliency within families.
- We strive to be leaders in our field through innovation, systematic planning, evaluation and resource provision.

*In the spirit of our efforts to promote reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional territories and oral practices of the Blackfoot (Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai), the Tsuut'ina (Sarcee), the Stoney Nakoda First Nations, the Métis Nation (Region 3), and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE

# Board Chair & President

Welcome to Providence's Report to the Community for our fiscal year, September 2020 to August 2021.

The year was our first full school year under the shadow of COVID-19. Thankfully, summer 2020 gave us time to do some detailed planning and preparation for the year ahead, using the experience we gained from the on-set of the pandemic in March 2020.

We welcomed children back to our classrooms in September. To keep the health risks as low as possible, we implemented comprehensive COVID-19 protocols, including busing cohorts – keeping children who travelled to school together in the same classroom (see page nine for more details).

The protocols we put in place helped us navigate the year successfully, but there is no doubt it was a very challenging year for everyone.

*We recognize it was a year like no other - and want to thank the staff sincerely for their amazing ability to adapt to constantly changing circumstances (sometimes minute-to-minute!) with skill and grace; their commitment to show up every day for our children and families - and their own teams; and the deep connection they demonstrated - to each other and to the children and families we serve.*

All of our programs felt the effects of six months of pandemic restrictions on children and families: lengthy isolation, limited social interactions with extended family and friends, and increased stress, etc.

Many of the children we work with exhibited more challenging behaviours, and many had not been properly assessed or diagnosed because of limited access to doctors and other professionals.

Our experienced staff developed and shared strategies with each other, with parents and with caregivers, and we saw significant improvements over the course of the year.

In the area of fundraising, we were thrilled to host two successful in-person events: an innovative hybrid gala event in February, Arts in the Atrium, and our annual Wildcatters Golf Tournament returned in August, albeit in a revised format.

In addition to thanking our staff, we want to thank our committed donors and sponsors who continued their support through a very uncertain year. And we are always grateful to our funders, Alberta Education and Alberta Children's Services for their continued support and guidance over the year.

Sincerely,



DAVID BOUCKHOUT  
Board Chair



RHONDA CONWAY  
President and CEO



## OUR *Programs*

### School-based Programs

Providence offers two unique Alberta Education-funded program streams: those based in our own schools across Calgary and those based in approved neighbourhood community preschools and child care programs (our LEARN Program).

Our school-based programs are designed to support children who may not be meeting typical developmental milestones. To attend, a child must qualify for Program Unit Funding (PUF) through Alberta Education.

Programs based in Providence schools include:

- Early Intervention
- Preschool
- Junior Kindergarten
- Kindergarten

### Our Schools

- Windsor Park (Main and Administration)
- Beddington
- Falconridge
- Hawkwood
- McKenzie Towne
- Midnapore

### BOARD OF

## *Directors*

David Bouckhout – Chair  
William Reeder – Vice Chair  
Karma Roste – Treasurer  
Craig Flint – Secretary  
Kathy Reimer – Director  
Chris Dorland – Director  
Geri Greenall – Director  
J. Lary Mosley – Director

# 800

**Total number of children in our  
school programs 2020-2021**

# 247

**Kindergarten graduates**

Our LEARN Program is based in community preschools and child care programs. Each child receives support through scheduled visits and consultations from Providence LEARN team members. The team includes teachers, teaching and therapeutic assistants, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists.

### Community-based Programs

Our Community Services team delivers several programs in the community:

#### Supported Child Care (SCC) Program

The SCC Program supports eligible child care programs to successfully meet the developmental needs of all the children in their care. Our program coaches provide information, resources, coaching and professional development.

The SCC Program is funded by the provincial government and administered by Providence in the Calgary area. It is free to access for registered child care programs, approved family day homes and out-of-school care programs.

#### Expanding Capacity and Learner Supports (ECLS) Program (Alberta Education)

The ECLS Program is a newly-designed program that provides therapy supports to K-12 students and staff in independent and private schools. Providence's ECLS team includes speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists. They offer direct therapy to students and professional development to staff.

#### Contracted Therapy Services

Providence therapists also provide therapy services to independent and charter schools, as well as private assessments, on a fee-for-service basis.



“ Our program coach shared such great ideas with us! My staff and I loved working with her. We have learned a lot and have implemented many new ideas in our centre - A Calgary Child Care Program director. ”

A family of four is posed for a photograph. On the left, a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark plaid short-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, stands with his hands in his pockets. Next to him is a woman with long reddish-brown hair, wearing a black cardigan over a patterned top and dark pants. In front of them, two young children are seated. On the left, a boy with brown hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and jeans, sits in a brown leather chair, resting his chin on his hand. On the right, a girl with blonde hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, sits on a dark surface, smiling at the camera.

## TAKING THINGS SLOWER

## *and with a little more gratitude*

It was, in Sally's own words, an "extremely stressful" year for their family. With COVID-19, her husband's work as a truck driver had slowed, and with no idea of when things might pick up again, he shifted to long-haul trucking. He was working full time, but was now out of town for days at a time. Although Sally had worked previously in the healthcare field, they decided it would work best for their family if she stayed home with their two children, Noah, who was five at the time, and three-year-old Bella.

But with the many difficult decisions they faced, one of the easier ones was deciding that Bella would join Noah in returning to in-class participation at Providence in September 2020.

"I was impressed with how quickly Providence put a new learning plan in place for Noah after the initial COVID-19 shutdown in March," Sally shared, "and we were confident they would keep the kids as safe as possible when they returned to school." She and Phillip felt the benefits far outweighed the risks.

Due to the cohort protocols Providence put in place to limit exposure, Noah and Bella were in the same class. Their teacher, Peggi, smiled as she recalled them in her class last year: "Bella adored Noah, and Noah was very protective of her, but sometimes he needed his own space."

"It was a lot of togetherness for them," admits Sally. "Noah is really enjoying his autonomy this year - in Grade One in a new school."

Both children still had an individual program plan and made great strides last year. Sally felt that Noah's overall confidence increased noticeably. He started his time at Providence being very fearful and preferred a far corner of the classroom. When he graduated from kindergarten last year, he had made many friends - including the staff in the front reception and the kitchen, where he stopped every day to say hello. Bella's ability to communicate greatly improved over the year.

After the challenges of the last year, Sally is looking ahead with a shift in perspective - "I am taking things a little slower - and with a little more gratitude," she said with a smile. Amen to that.

# Highlights of the Year

## **New funding model from Alberta Education**

Alberta Education implemented a new funding model for the 2020-2021 school year. The new model decreased instructional hours to 400 (down from 530) per school year. Beginning in September 2020, children attended classes four days per week (M-Th).

## **COVID-19 Response**

### ***Busing Cohorts***

In addition to masking, hand sanitizing, limiting use of common areas inside the school, and a zero- tolerance sickness policy, Providence instituted busing cohorts – keeping those children who travelled to school on the same bus, or were in the same family, in the same classrooms. This meant teachers could have a group of children in their class ranging in age from 2.8 years to 6 years.

Although these changes made for different classroom dynamics, each child had an individual program plan, which insured their support and learning in the classroom was designed for them.

### ***Temporary At-Home Learning***

We formalized our Temporary At-Home Learning program (which we created in March 2020 when schools closed) for those children who were medically fragile or whose families were not comfortable sending them to school. The program provided structured learning delivered through virtual educational and therapy sessions and included take-home resources and equipment for children. Participation numbers fluctuated between 50-80 through the year.

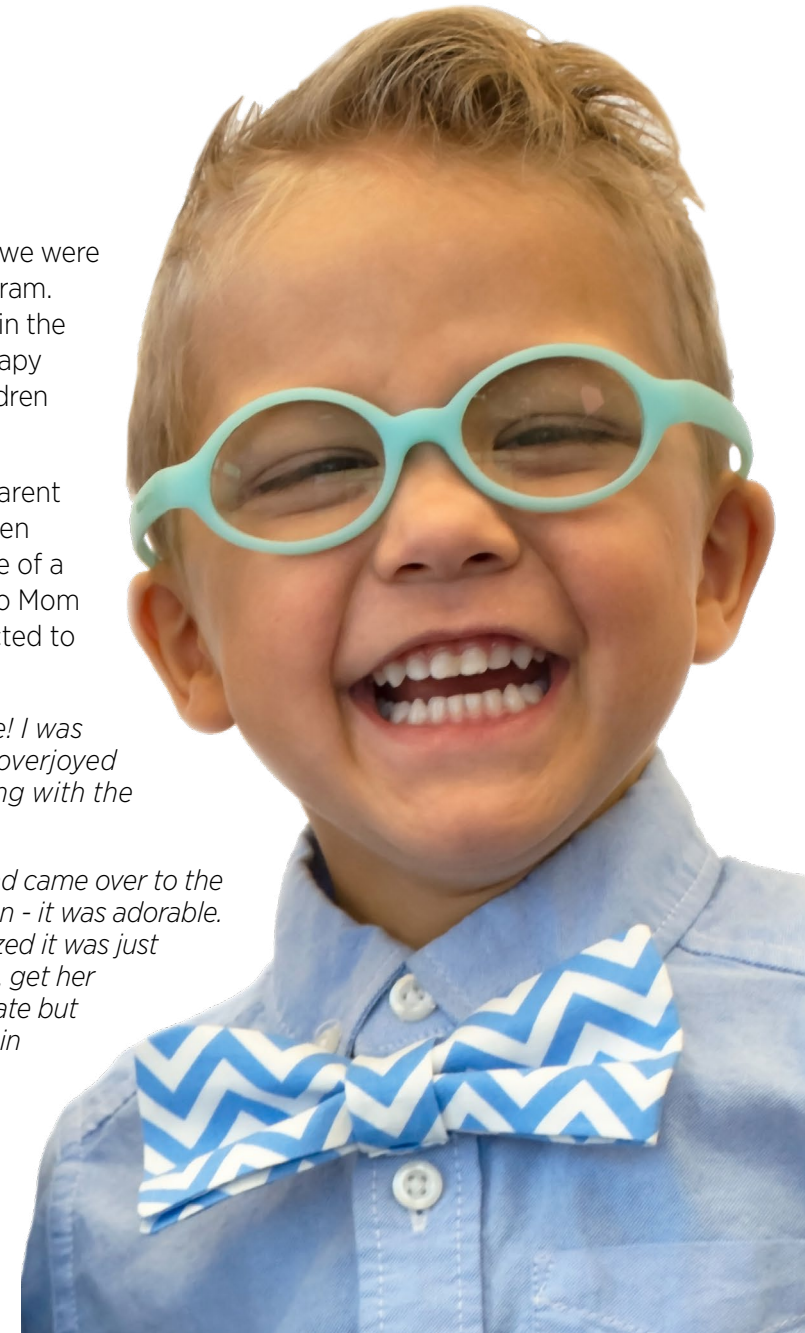
## ***Music Therapy Program***

Thanks to the support of Crescent Point Energy, we were able to continue to offer our Music Therapy Program. Because we were limiting the number of people in the classrooms, music therapists from JB Music Therapy hosted the sessions via Zoom – whether the children were in a classroom or at home.

One of our teachers received this note from a parent whose son is one of our many non-verbal children with autism. The children were at home because of a suspected case of COVID-19 in the classroom, so Mom was able to witness first-hand how her son reacted to the Music Therapy Zoom session!

*“He was clapping - but he was doing a lot more! I was absolutely stunned, elated, dumbfounded, and overjoyed at how much he was responding to and engaging with the music therapy.*

*He actually stopped jumping on his trampoline and came over to the computer when he noticed everyone on the screen - it was adorable. He was trying to touch the screen - when he realized it was just a picture he grabbed my hand and was like “Mum, get her outta there for me.” His reactions weren’t immediate but he did touch his tummy, clap, wave, and blow out in response to the songs. He was also focused and relaxed - even dancing after the session was over. I’m thankful the unfortunate circumstances let me witness all of this!”*





### Supported Child Care (SCC) Program

The SCC Program supports child care programs to successfully meet the developmental needs of all the children in their care. Our SCC program coaches provide information, resources, coaching and professional development.

The SCC team supported 89 child care programs over the last report period (April 2020 – March 2021), offering over 2000 hours of direct support. Approx. 1700 children were impacted, about half under the age of 4.5.

An ongoing challenge the SCC program faces is the high levels of turn-over of staff, children and leadership in the child care programs. To help address this challenge, the SCC team began work on a series of short, easily-accessible webinars that child care programs can use as foundational knowledge and ongoing training for child care professionals.

The SCC program has been operational now for four years and has collected solid data showing that improvements in the following areas can be the most transformational in creating inclusive child care programs that meet the needs of each child in the program. The webinars have been developed around these topic areas:

- Schedules, routines and activities
- Transitions
- Communication
- Engagement and Play
- Inclusive Practice
- Social Emotional Learning
- Leadership Competencies
- Trauma Informed Practices
- Environment

### Integrating Best-Practices in Early Childhood Education

We continued to integrate three areas of best-practice service delivery throughout the organization. They are outlined on the following two pages.

The work undertaken in these areas over the past year has been timely. Regular inter-disciplinary staff meetings and time set aside for reflective practice in each of these areas helped support our staff through the challenges of the year.

## WHAT IS *Reflective Practice*

Reflective practice is, in its simplest form, thinking about or reflecting on what you do. It is closely linked to the concept of learning from experience, in that you think about what you did, and what happened, and decide what you would do differently next time.

### Understanding Early Brain Development

Completion of the Alberta Family Wellness Initiative's 30-hour Brain Story Certification continues to be a requirement of employment for all Providence staff. The course demonstrates how the things we experience in the first years of life affect how a brain develops. This year, staff participated in a fun, interactive brain-building exercise that showed how the combination of genetics and life events affect brain architecture.



### Understanding the Effects of Trauma

Neuro-Sequential Model in Education (NME) training by Dr. Bruce Perry helps educators better identify and support children who may have experienced trauma. The toxic stress resulting from traumatic experiences can have long-term negative consequences on both physical and mental health. A second cohort of Providence employees completed the training this year with a total of 15 employees now certified. This team of 15 help implement trauma-informed strategies across Providence.

### Implementing the Natural Supports Philosophy

The Natural Supports philosophy encourages individuals and families to develop and contribute to a life-long network of supportive family, community and peer relationships to promote resiliency, social integration and positive development. This past year, this framework has been particularly challenging to implement: our families often had little to no contact with extended family, neighbours, friends, etc. due to the restricted interactions imposed by COVID-19 protocols. In some cases, the only outside interactions our families had were with our staff.

“ My son has made leaps and bounds in his learning ability since going to school. The teachers are all very gifted and have helped him substantially. I really value this program and the help it provides the young children. I am now able to communicate better with him at home and understand him better - A Providence parent. ”



**“He even wants**  
*to go to school on weekends!”*

Keith was born in late 2017 and was two-and-a-half at the start of the pandemic. As an only child, his only contact through the day was his mom, Jane. As pandemic restrictions relaxed, his behaviour was often aggressive – and unpredictable, so play dates were hard to manage and playground visits were few and far between. They had limited contact with family, friends and neighbours.

Jane had heard of Providence and lived close to one of the locations. After coming for a tour, she knew her son would benefit greatly from the social interaction and regular routine, as well as the individual program plan geared toward his individual needs.

She knew it was the right decision to register him, but it came as a shock that the following month her three-year-old was suddenly going to school!

At first Keith was completely silent and kept his distance from his teacher and from the other students. Although he immediately embraced the classroom routines (ie: hang up coat, put on indoor shoes, wash hands), he did not engage and would often hit when confronted with an unfamiliar situation.

Then he found a friend. They began playing together quietly on the playground, holding hands in the classroom and looking out for each other. One of his first words was his friend's name. Now, Keith greets his friends and teachers, participates in classroom activities and, his mom says, “he doesn't stop talking!”

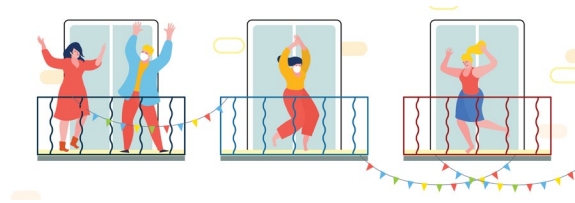
From day one, Jane says Keith loved coming to Providence. “He even wants to go on the weekends!”

# Community Support

Thank you to our loyal donors and sponsors who continued their support this past year and welcome to those who joined us this year!

Arts in the Atrium took place February 27 at the Delta Marriott South. Guests purchased a hotel room with a balcony overlooking the atrium. After dinner was served to each room, guests watched a performance by Calgary's own Forte Musical Theatre Guild. Attendance and performance restrictions were changing even hours before the event – but in the end, everyone enjoyed a night out in the middle of a lockdown!

*Arts in the Atrium*



The 19th annual Wildcatters Golf Tournament took place August 31 at Country Hills Golf Club. The revised format included staggered tee times for 120 golfers, with no large gathering at the end.

We would like to extend a big Thank You to our event sponsors and to the many Providence parents who volunteered their time at the event!

Secure Energy has been a generous supporter of Providence for the last decade. They held their annual Charity Campaign again this year during Stampede week, and Providence was one of several charities supported by this event. Thank you to our friends at Secure Energy!

**SECURE  
ENERGY**



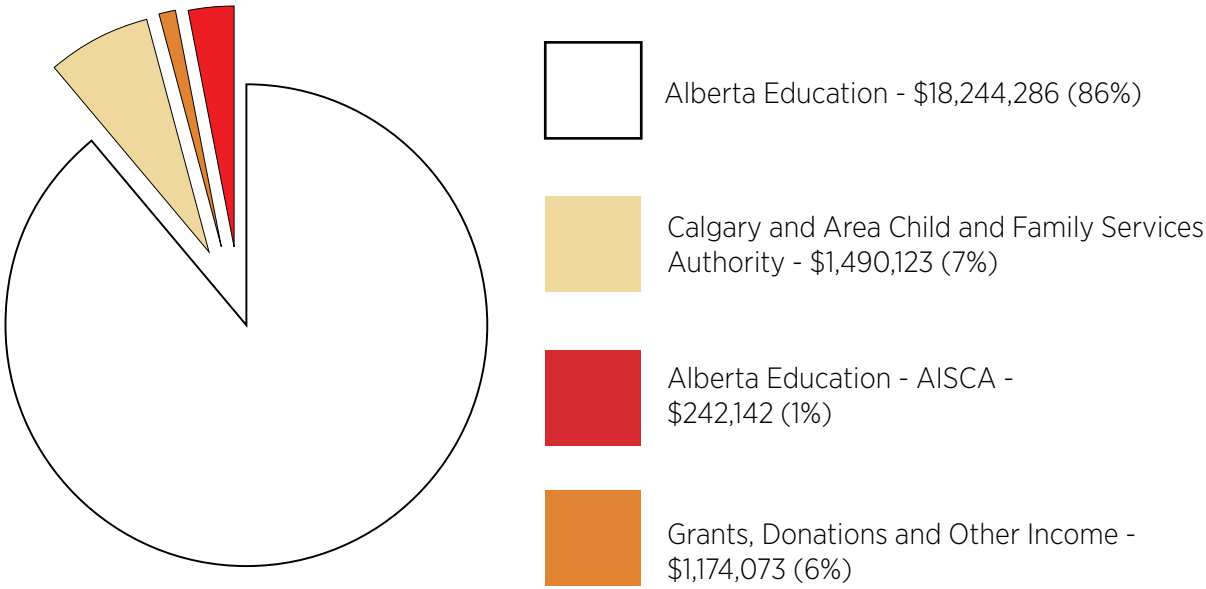
Thanks to Crescent Point Energy for sponsoring our Music Therapy Program.

Thanks to the Calgary Foundation for their generous support of the development of a series of training webinars for child care professionals.

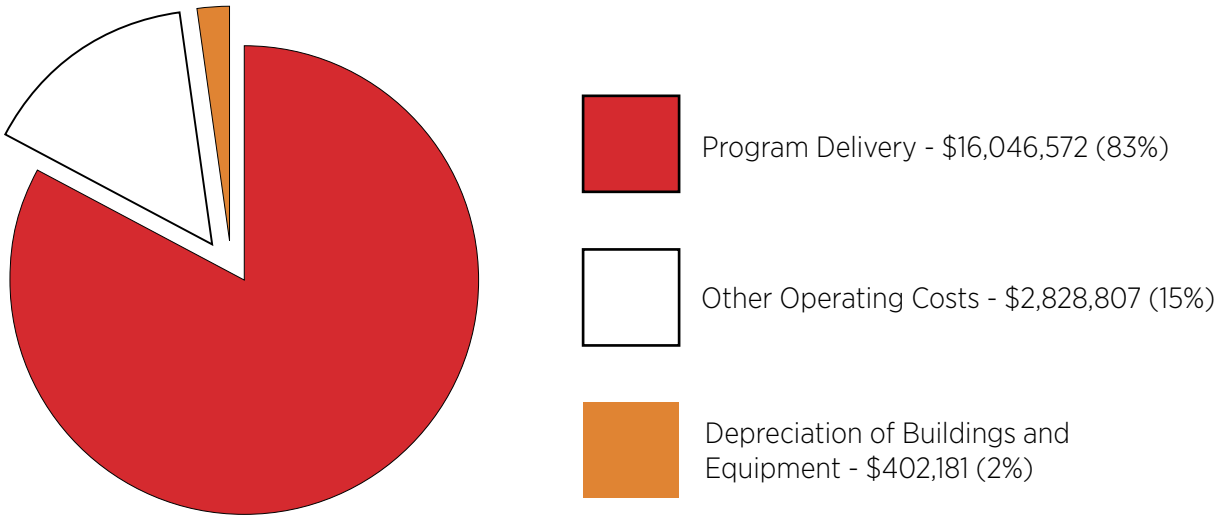


OUR  
*Financials*

Revenue



Expenses



Our fully audited statements are available by contacting [general@providencechildren.com](mailto:general@providencechildren.com)

For more  
**INFORMATION:**  
Call 403-255-5577  
[info@providencechildren.com](mailto:info@providencechildren.com)  
[www.providencechildren.com](http://www.providencechildren.com)

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