



COMMUNITIES UNITED, INC.

CREATIVE START CHILDREN'S CENTERS

2019-2020 AGENCY SELF-ASSESSMENT

**ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF THE CHILD,
EMPOWERING THE FAMILY,
AND STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY**

NEWTON CREATIVE START

573-B Washington St.
Newton, MA 02458
617.527.6689

WALTHAM CREATIVE START

169 Elm St.
Waltham, MA 02453
781.647.0542

WOBBURN CREATIVE START

470 Wildwood Ave.
Woburn, MA 01801
781.932.9578



Mission

Communities United Inc. (CUI) is a community based private nonprofit organization that continually strives to provide high quality comprehensive education and family services to a diverse population of children, ages 4 months-5 years, and their families. A core component of our mission is to ensure the success of the child, empower the family and strengthen the community.

History

In 1970, a group of concerned parents, town officials and community volunteers formed Communities United, Inc., then a pilot program supported solely by Head Start funding with the purpose of providing comprehensive services in education, social services, health and parenting. At that time, CUI served a preschool population of 3-5 year olds for half-days in five communities. By 1980, the staff had grown to 50 and the program served 180 children.

Over the next ten years, the number of staff and children served doubled. The need for full-day childcare became a growing issue, and by 1995 CUI becomes a lead agency for state-funded Community Partnership Grants (CPG). CPG provided tuition subsidies enabling families to afford full day care for their children.

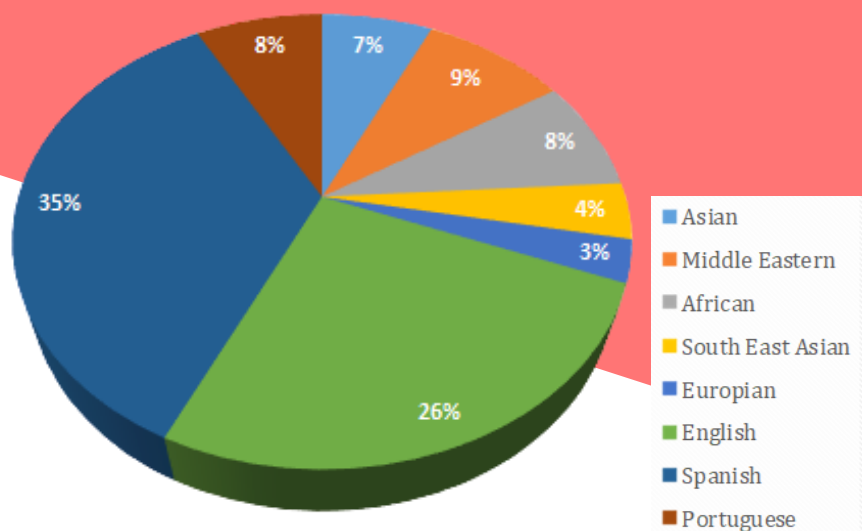
Today, the agency's 70 employees serve approximately 300 children, of infant, toddler and preschool age, from eleven unique suburban communities along the Rte. 128 belt. These communities are Arlington, Belmont, Brookline, Burlington, Lexington, Needham, Newton, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley and Woburn.



LANGUAGES AT HOME

CHILDREN
WE
SERVE

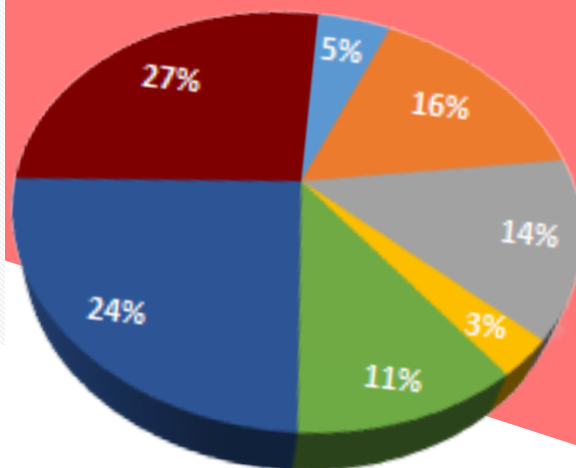
PRESCHOOL



All our centers welcome and respect each family's home language and culture. CUI is privileged to have a diverse population of families who speak languages that are shown in the graph above.

CUI consistently supports each family's home language while encouraging the acquisition of English in the classroom.

INFANTS & TODDLERS



About 81% of the children, served by CUI, have a home language other than English.

51

4 months -36 months

116

Preschoolers- 3 year olds

140

Preschoolers 4-5 year olds

ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN BY AGE

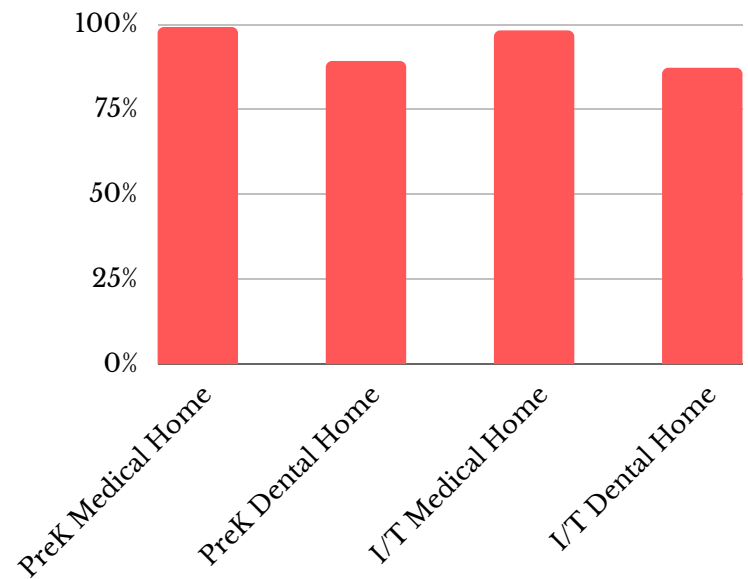
CUI serves children ages 4 months to 5 years - Enrollment of children by age is represented here.





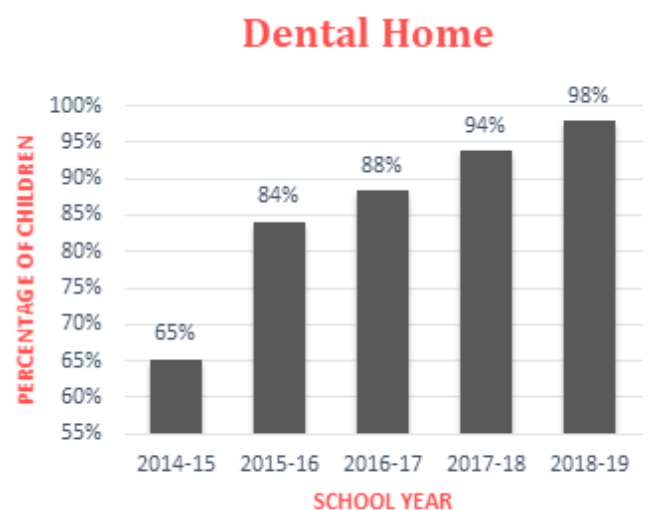
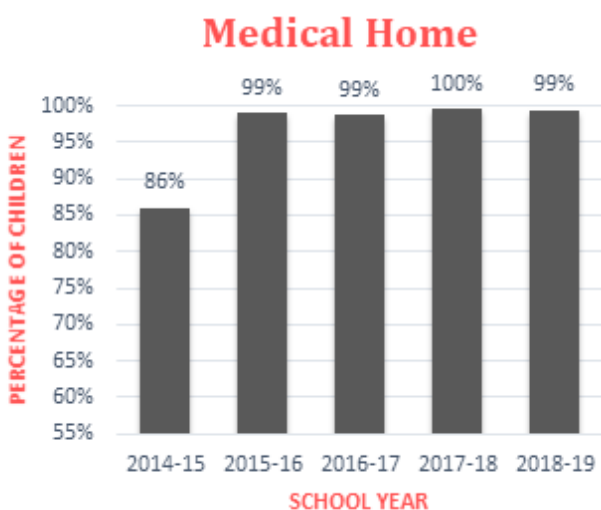
MEDICAL & DENTAL HOME

The graph shows 99% of Preschool and 98% of Infant & Toddler age children having a medical home. 89% of Preschool and 87% of Infant & Toddler age children having a dental home.



CUI ensures that children have a medical and dental home and that they are up-to-date on their well-child care visits. The Social Service staff works with each family to ensure access to medical and oral health care in their community.

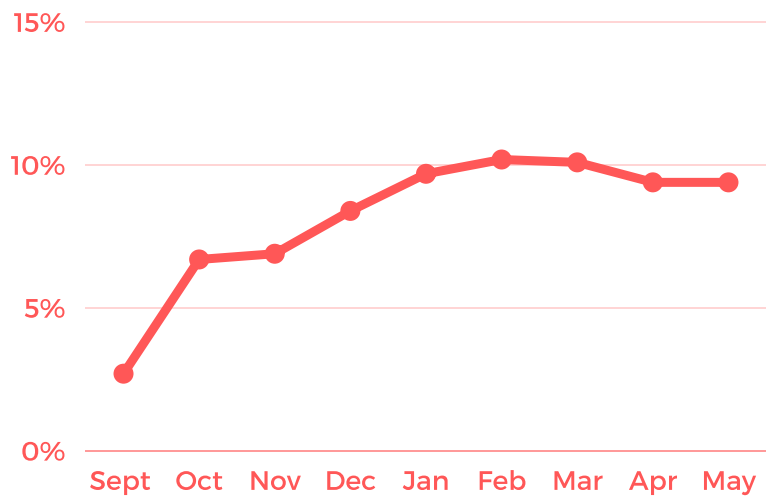
The graphs below demonstrate our commitment to increase and sustain access to medical and oral health over 5 years.



IEP & IFSP

A COMMITMENT TO HELP EVERY CHILD MEET THEIR POTENTIAL

CUI reserves a minimum of 10% of their enrollment for children with IEP's and IFSP's. CUI staff are trained annually on working with children with special needs. Our agency employs a Disabilities Coordinator that supports children's participation and access so they thrive in our early childhood classrooms. The coordinator also helps teachers provide individualized instruction and is available to support families.



A LITTLE PATIENCE AND INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION GOES A LONG WAY TO HELP CHILDREN ACHIEVE POSITIVE OUTCOMES.

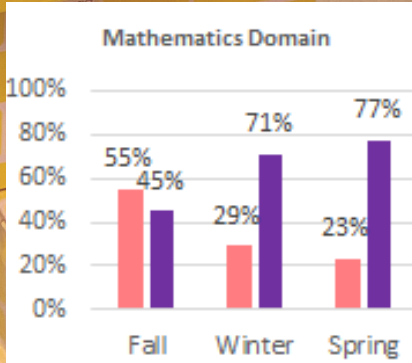
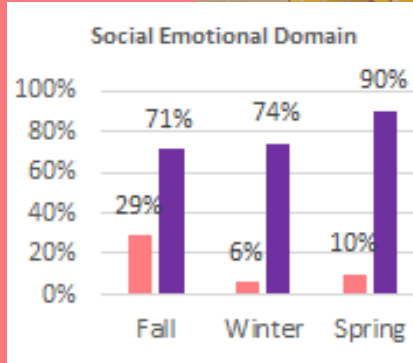
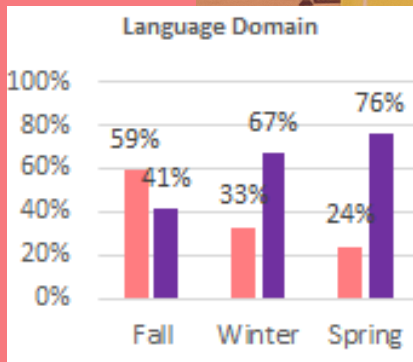
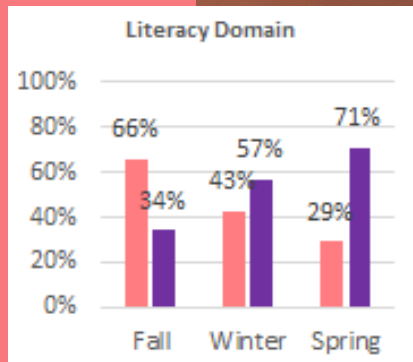
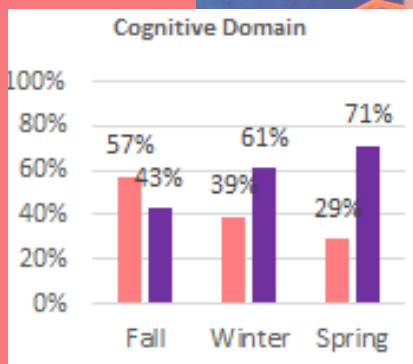
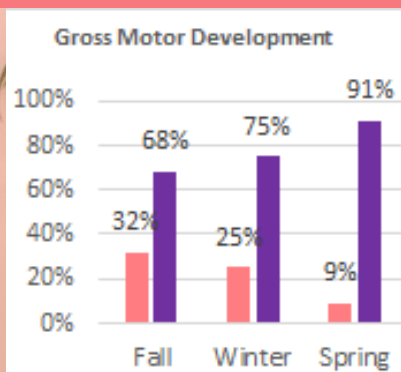
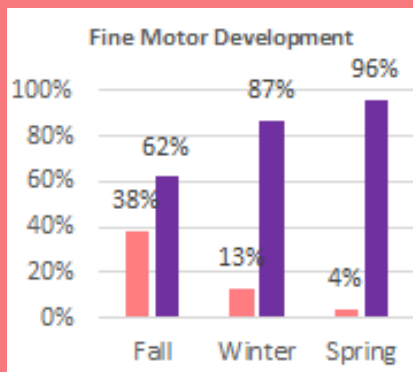
At the start of the school year, a toddler enrolled at CUI was receiving Early Intervention services to address several developmental areas. The child did not drink from an open cup, did not seek out peer interactions, loud sounds were very dysregulating, and eye contact was minimal. Staff at CUI worked on building a strong connection with the child that would allow them to be responsive to the child's own communication methods and sensory needs.

Upon hearing the child say phonetic alphabet sounds while looking at a poster of the alphabet, teachers introduced the alphabet into different activities and routine. The child began making eye contact with teachers and reaching for their hand so they could participate in the alphabet activity. In a few months, the child would respond to hearing "Row row row your boat" by grabbing a teacher's hands and pulling them back-and-forth, smiling throughout the whole interaction. The child began approaching circle time during preferred songs, quietly singing the last word or dancing along. The child also joined peers in "ready set go!" running games, screaming "oh" for "go" as he ran, laughed, and played next to peers.

Every day for several months, teachers offered an open cup with some water during snack time and each time, the cup was pushed away. But with consistency, patience, and positive reinforcement, the child became more tolerant of the cup being placed closer until one day, the child accepted a drink from the cup. A smile and a tap on the hand was the child's method to say, "more water, please!".

Program Goal 1

Children will demonstrate age appropriate progress across domains of: Language, Communication and Literacy with a focus on their home language that will support their readiness for kindergarten.



3 YR. OLD CHILD OUTCOMES

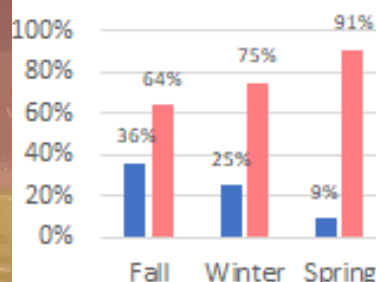
This school year started like all others but certainly ended differently than any others. By enlisting our parents over the last 3 months, we strengthened the child, teacher and family relationships. This strong and individualized collaboration helped crystalize for parents how important their role as their child's primary teacher is and filled many with confidence and trust in their abilities. This Spring we saw 96% of our three year olds meeting or exceeding expectation in fine motor development. At home many families were providing writing, coloring, painting and scissor activities for their children and sending back documentation of what their children had completed.

4 YR. OLD CHILD OUTCOMES

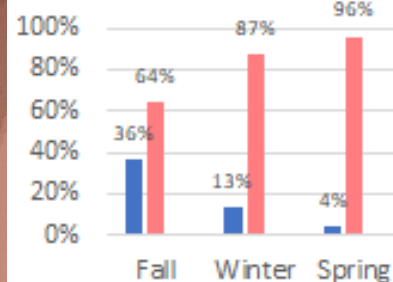
■ Below Expectations
■ Meets/Exceeds Expectations

Like our 3 year olds, we needed to enlist our parents in a partnership to help us create stability, routine and order once our classroom doors closed. Teachers immediately began looking for ways to support our parents and provide them the tools they needed to create an Environment for learning. Weekly Google Meets and video lessons were shared with parents and teachers followed up to see how children were doing with the book readings and activities. This Spring we saw many of our 4 year olds make significant progress in the Social-Emotional, Fine Motor and Gross Motor Domains. Parents shared pictures and videos of their children happy and engaged in hopscotch, jumping rope, dancing or trying yoga poses. Domains such as Cognition, Language, Literacy and Math did not show the same gains as these skills are harder to assess via a distance learning format.

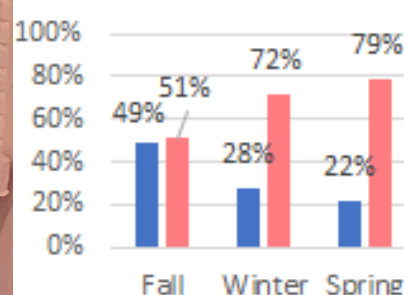
Gross Motor Development



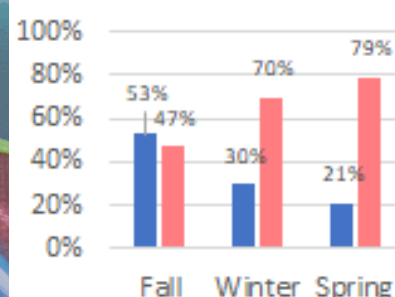
Fine Motor Development



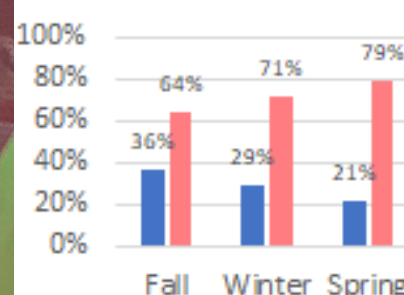
Cognitive Domain



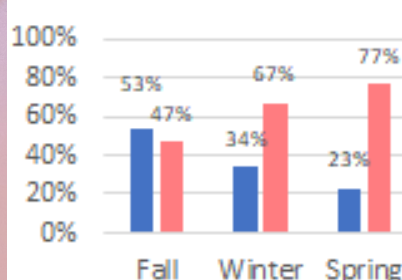
Literacy Domain



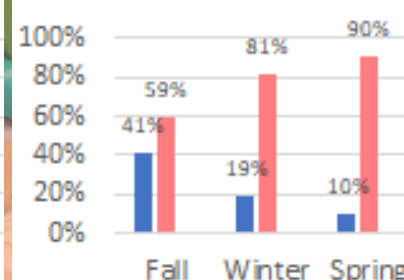
Language Domain



Mathematics Domain



Social Emotional Domain

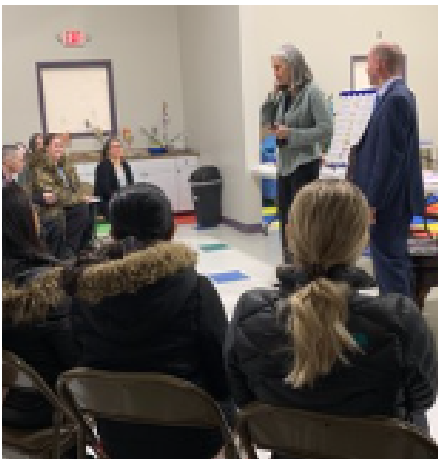


ENGAGING & CONNECTING PARENTS WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Program Goal 2

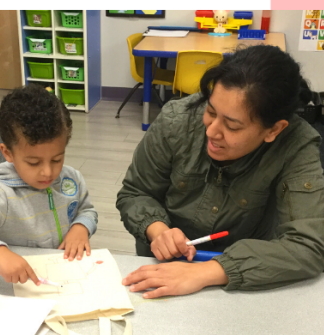
CUI will collaborate with families and community partners to develop supportive networks that promote positive caregiver/child interactions, increase parent participation in parent meetings, trainings and policy council meetings, so parents are powered as advocates, leaders and their child's first teacher.

- Comcast Cares
- Cradles to Crayons
- Early Intervention
- Family Access
- Harvard School of Education
- Newton Chambers of Commerce
- Newton Historical Society
- Public Schools
- State Legislators
- Waltham Chambers of Commerce
- WATCH
- Woburn Business Association



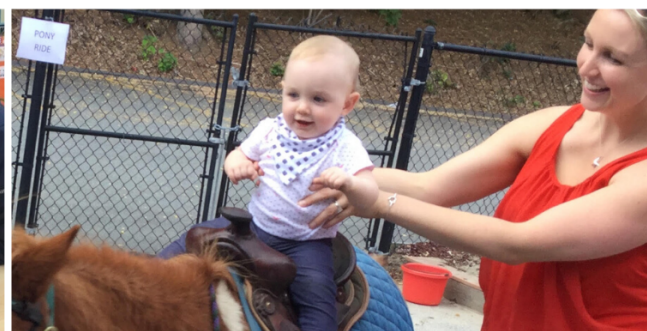
Goal 2 continues...

Family Engagement at CUI is a strong component of our program. Opportunities for parents to participate in their child's learning is essential. All sites held monthly parent-child events such as Rhyme of the Week, Vegetable Soup Day, and Around the World. A visit to the state house was organized to empower parents to speak with Legislators in support of early education. Parenting workshops were provided onsite by our licensed social workers. ESL, Computer training and Substitute Teacher classes were also held for parents.



2019 - 2020

Family Engagement





50TH ANNIVERSARY 1970-2020

CUI celebrated it's 50th anniversary on February 8, 2020. The celebration kicked off with a Pancake Breakfast. The breakfast followed by activities included a scavenger hunt, a photo booth, face painting, airbrush tattoos, STEM, literacy and gross motor fun as well as presentations by 3 local musicians: Maddie Welch, Mr. Ramon and MaryBeth Maes.

The celebration was well attended by children, families, and staff past and present. CUI Board members, Policy Council members, Community Partners and elected officials all participated in the event.



50TH ANNIVERSARY

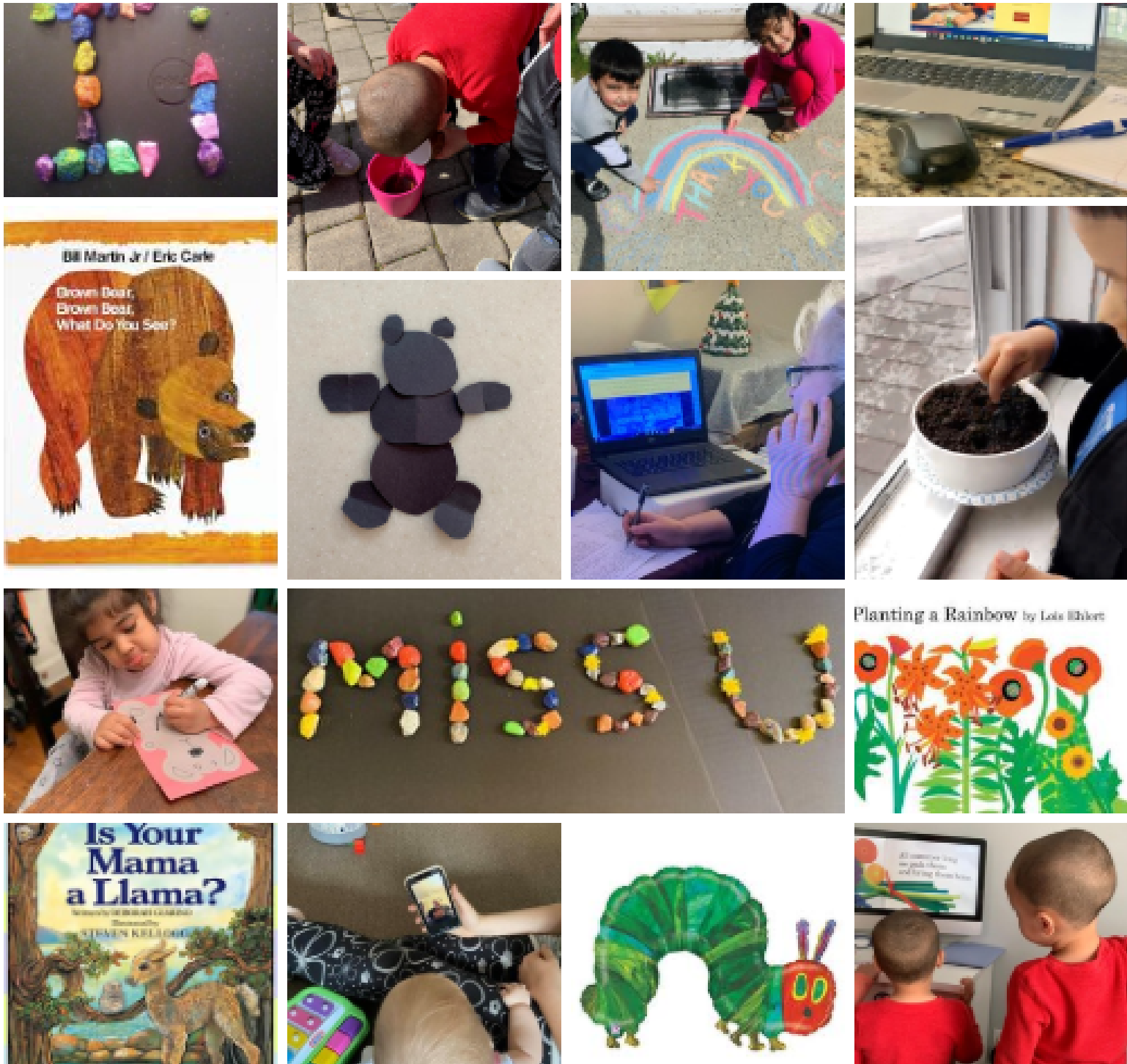


CUI was fortunate to celebrate with one of the founding Board members, Elizabeth Nicastro.

Guest speakers included staff members Kristi Veronee, Carla Doucette and Cate Pettingell. Current policy council members Enid Landreth and Diana Bonia as well as Rebecca Long a past Policy Council chair joined us with her CUI graduate, Esther. Mayor Fuller from Waltham presented CUI with a citation on 50 years of service as did State Representative Tom Stanley and Dana Hanson from the Newton Mayor Office.



DISTANCE LEARNING



CUI's education staff rose to the challenge of providing exemplary distance learning activities for our children. Virtual contact via Zoom and Google Meet became the norm over the last 3 months to keep us all connected. Our Social Service staff provided many community resources and referrals for families in need of food, diapers and other essential supplies. Our Mental Health Specialists continued to provide social-emotional supports to children via Second STEP and Baby Doll Curriculum activities via videos that the whole family could participate in.

Program Goal 3

CUI will incorporate wellness components (physical, emotional, spiritual and financial) into all our programming (weaving them in) taking into consideration cultural differences, individual preferences and attitudes about health and wellness activity levels and diversity.



Staff wellness continues to be a priority at CUI. Monthly newsletters that include new healthy recipes and staff challenges created by employees for employees has been ongoing for the last 3 years.

Since March, CUI staff and families have had to adjust to a change in daily routines and schedules. Many have been feeling a sense of uncertainty and heightened stress about their health, job and financial security. CUI has taken extra steps to remind employees and our families to take frequent mental and physical breaks, exercise and participate in other non-work-related activities to reduce anxiety and improve productivity during this time.

CUI employees and families participation in wellness during this pandemic.

Families	Employees
Board games	100% increase insteps
Dancing	Bird watching and painting - bird houses
Dodge Ball	Checking vitals
Gardening	Finishing college courses
Hopscotch	Gardening
I spy	Knitting
Pond/River walk	Learning computer skills
Puzzles	Recipes with fruit and veggies
Reading	More cooking
Scavenger hunts	Praying with family
Self care tips	Reading
Spending time with-loved ones	Riding a bike
Walking in a park neighborhood	Running/Trail running
Yoga	Sit ups and step ups
	Skin Care
	Spending time with loved ones
	Walking
	Yoga

Technology is a great enabler. Telephone, email, snap chat, postal mail, text messages, video platforms such as Zoom & Google Meet allowed us to maintain relationships with employees as well as families while working from home. The virtual communication has made all of us feel less lonely and isolated, and have had a positive effect on employees and families alike.

PROGRAM GOAL 4

CUI will strive to provide facilities that are modern, functional, accessible and reliable to allow staff to deliver high quality services to children, their families and our communities.

Creative Start Children's Centers



Waltham Creative Start



Waltham Creative Start



Newton Creative Start



Newton Creative Start

OPENING
SOON!

Burlington Creative Start



Woburn Creative Start



Woburn Creative Start

Quality learning environments that are safe are a priority at CUI. There are 3 child care centers with a 4th facility planned to be open in September 2020, and a central office. The Woburn and Waltham facilities were recently renovated providing large, open classrooms to support high quality learning experiences. Our Newton Creative Start lease will expire in June 2021. We are currently looking for new, modern and functional space to serve our Watertown and Newton families.

Center Highlights

The Box City Project: Project Based Learning

Science: observation, balance

Technology: properly and safely using tools like scissors, rulers, hole punchers, etc.

Engineering: balance, perspective, brainstorming

Art: esthetics, color, texture, mixed media

Math: size, shapes, planes, perimeter, interior / exterior, relational sizes

Jackson Homestead and Museum: partnership with Historic Newton enabled classroom to go on monthly field trips and learn about Newton's history of food, farming, and family life.

Newton Board of Health: provided our school with 25 backpacks filled with non-perishable foods each month. A valuable resource for our families facing food insecurities

Healthy Watertown Grant provided funds to purchase food and materials for weekly classroom nutrition activities, and Gross Motor equipment for the indoor gym.

Reading with Newton's Mayor

Distance Learning

PARENT'S TESTIMONIALS

"NICOLE IS LOVING THIS AND SHE SURPRISES ME ON HOW MUCH SHE KNOWS ABOUT THE LETTERS. THANK YOU FOR THESE EMAILS!"

- AMANDA S.

FROM CARLA GONZALEZ, MOTHER OF ISHA GARCIA-

"EMILY GRACIAS POR AYUDARNOS Y DARNOS ACTIVIDADES CADA SEMANA PARA ELLOS ESO ES DIVERTIDO".

WHICH MEANS "EMILY, THANK YOU FOR HELPING US AND GIVING US ACTIVITIES EVERY WEEK, THIS IS FUN"

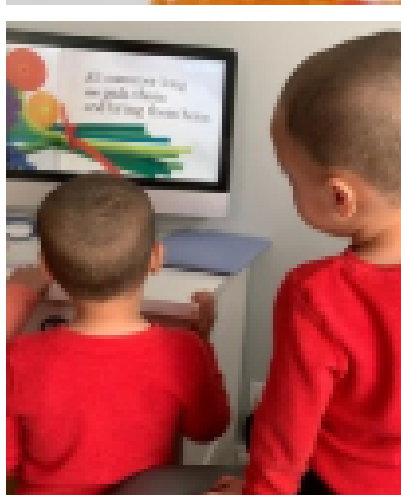
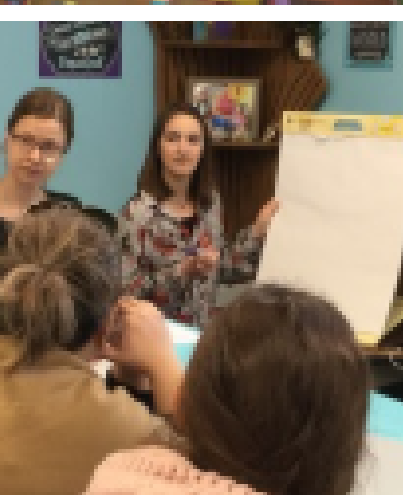
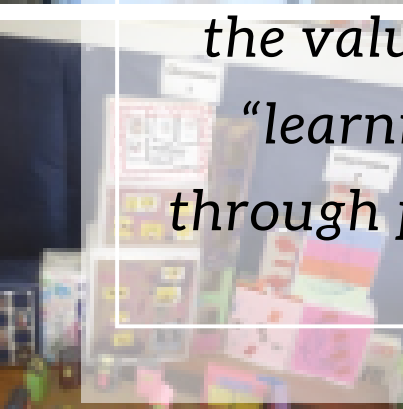
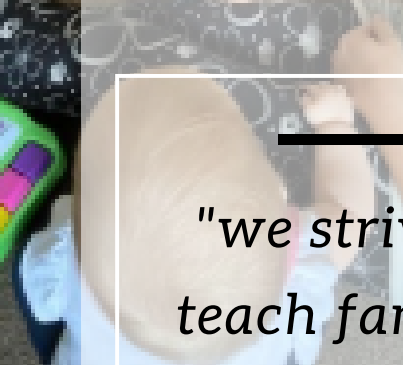
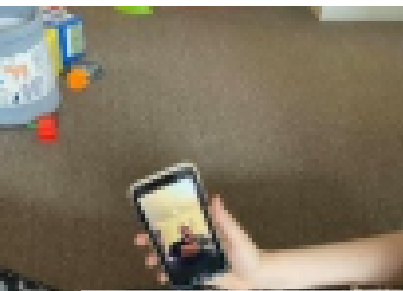
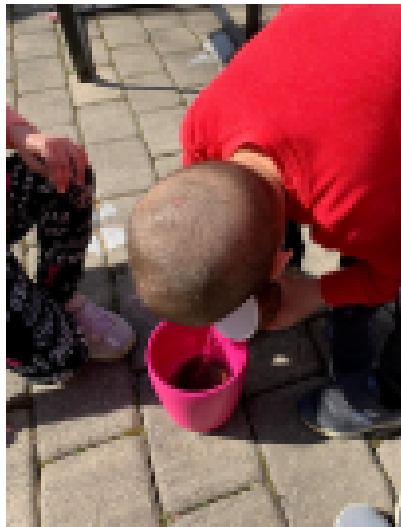
"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE VIDEO CHAT THIS MORNING JACK WAS SO EXCITED! HE'S WRITING HIS FIRST NAME INDEPENDENTLY NOW AND COUNTING UP TO 29. THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR HARD WORK AND DEDICATION THIS YEAR."

- BEST, MICHELLE LYMAN

Newton Creative Start

Plan & implement hands-on activities that are developmentally appropriate and support each child's individual learning goals. Build community partnerships to strengthen family services.





WALTHAM CREATIVE START

"Building" STEM Skills

- **Block Play:** Building and creating leads to so many opportunities for growth in the areas of science, art, cognition, social studies, fine and gross motor, and of course, social-emotional.
- **Box City:** Using recycled materials, art scraps, and their own ingenuity, each class contributed buildings to our City.
- **Harvard School of Education:** Strong relationship and ongoing study of ECE with **Sarah Surrain** (ED.M/Ph.D candidate), who embarked on a new study of the use of music as a teaching tool for children.
- **Lego Day for Parents**
- **Parent Soup Day**
- **Tufts Dental Visit**
- **While distanced families have shared their children's at-home creations of forts and caves out of couch cushions, and restaurants out of Legos, weekly book activities.** Something as innocuous as building with blocks opens a door to limitless educational opportunities. A framework on which families can build. An education that will far outlast the child and family's time with us.

PARENT'S TESTIMONIALS

"I am writing this letter... to express your gratefulness and support for one of the first teachers of K, Ms. Claudia Molina. Miss Claudia has provided a warm and comforting environment for K, which was extremely important in the very beginning, when he entered school for a first time and with very few English words in his vocabulary. On the other hand, she made a big impact on him to adopt various daily routines more easily, and to comply with rules of fine behavior in-and-outside the classroom. Ms. Claudia also played big role in his progressively increasing English vocabulary while including few Spanish word too. She was observing and helping K to achieve his highest potentials while painting, drawing, trying to write. Overall, she really gave him (and the other children in his group) all the care, love and support as a teacher, and beyond.

In parallel, she gave me a lot of support and care as a parent, and very soon I felt much attached to her. I really appreciate Ms. Claudia and I will always be attached to her, as she is one of the most heartwarming people I have ever known.

And, I would like to thank everyone again for making this school a great environment for child's growth and development. We are really grateful to have you and the other teachers, you are all wonderful people. - **Konstantin's mom**"

"THANK YOU, MS. ...
GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND LOVE,
WHICH YOU GIVE TO EACH CHILD WHO PASSES
THROUGH YOUR CLASS."

FROM DANIEL Y DANIELA'S FAMILY



Woburn Creative Start

"Family well-being occurs when all family members are safe, healthy, and have chances for educational advancement and economic mobility."

CENTER EVENTS

PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD INTERACTIONS THROUGH HANDS-ON LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

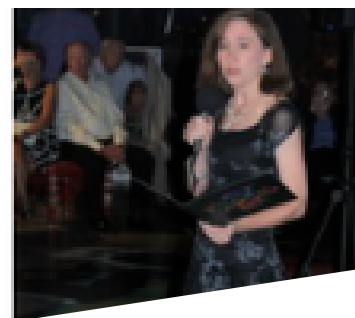
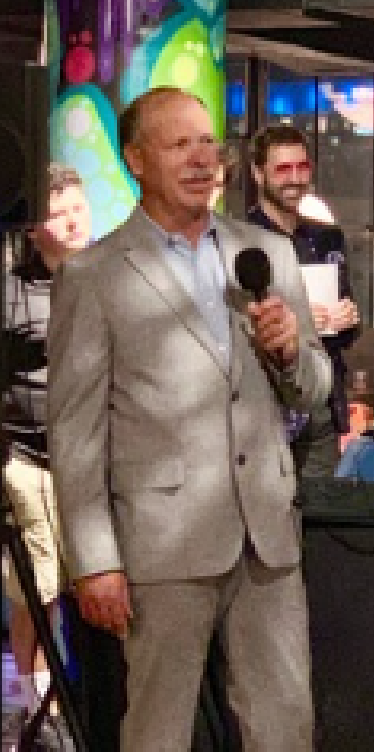
- Around the World
- Advocacy Day at the State House
- Back to School Safety Event with Woburn Fire Department
- Book Reading with Congresswoman Clark
- Literacy Activity with Woburn Librarian
- Rhyme of the Week
- Vegetable Soup Day with Ms. Terri

"Oliver and Julissa have enjoyed the distance learning. Today we read "brown bear, brown bear" and did a fun craft." – Madeline Garcia

PARENT'S TESTIMONIALS

"I just wanted to say thank you to you and all of the teachers for all of the work you are doing for the kids! I'm sure it is an uncertain time for CUI and all of you, and in spite of that you continue to work so hard for the kids in order to provide educational opportunities for them in any ways that you can and I want you all to know that it is greatly appreciated! We have implemented a daily schedule here at home and Cora and Shelby love watching the videos that you send during our "circle time" in the morning and were so excited to see their teachers and friends during the Google meet up last week. Thank you all again for all of the work that you and the teachers and staff continue to do for our kids!!! Stay safe and healthy,"

- Kaitlin, Michael, Cora and Shelby Camadeco



4TH ANNUAL GALA

CUI hosted it's 4th successful Annual Gala amidst Favreau's stunning design elements & panoramic views of the Boston skyline at Boston's most unique venue - ***the Favreaulous Factory!***

Dance party by Fred Astaire's dance team, Outstanding Commitment Award recognition to Bob Ernst, Live & Silent Auction and Wine Pull were some of the festivities at the Gala.

5th Annual Gala

to be held virtually

Thursday, October 15, 2020

Leadership & Governance

Board of Directors

Chairman, Harry Carey
Treasurer, Maa-Ablah Apo
Clerk, Helene Forte
Elizabeth Ching
Molly De John
Janet Fogel
Jack Myers
Maddie Welch

Policy Council Members

Chairwoman, Enid Landreth – Woburn Creative Start
Diana Bonia – Newton Creative Start
Grigory Hakimov – Woburn Creative Start
Amanda Leavitt – Woburn Creative Start
Michelle Lyman – Newton Creative Start
Sandra Menjivar – Waltham Creative Start
Swabulah Nabyonga – Waltham Creative Start
Rina Shrestha – Woburn Creative Start

Senior Leadership Team

Executive Director, Terri Natale
Head Start/Early Head Start Director – Julie Gillcrist
Director of Early Childhood Education – Sylvia Dandrata
Director of Family & Community Engagement – Open
Accounting Manager – John Soehle



Strong Leadership and Governance is essential to providing quality services at CUI. Leadership and governance in Head Start programs is unique including three separate entities: the governing body, the Policy Council and the Leadership staff. All three entities are responsible for providing leadership, direction, and guidance to ensure the execution of program functions as mandated by the Head Start Performance Standards.

Communities United, Inc.

Creative Start Children's Center

50 Years of Serving Children & Families

Our programs are designed to meet the educational, social, health and nutritional needs of children.

We offer:

Focus on Language & Literacy

On-site health & educational screenings

Supportive services for children and families

Year-round enrollment & flexible schedule

Free and nutritious meals

Master or Bachelor degreed teachers in each classroom

4 Militia Dr. Ste. 1 Lexington, MA 02421

www.communitieunitedinc.org

617.744.6076

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