It is time to focus on the real basics—working with the whole child, including both academics and social-emotional health.

A. Dirk Hightower
Executive Director, Children’s Institute
Stories highlighting the importance of social and emotional learning—the ongoing process through which people enhance their ability to integrate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to achieve success in life—are becoming more commonplace in the professional journals and mainstream media, from the *American Journal of Public Health* to *USA Today*. Research indicates that children with pro-social behaviors like sharing, helping others, and showing empathy were more likely to graduate high school on time, complete a college degree, and obtain stable, full-time employment as young adults. They were also less likely to receive public assistance as adults or have a criminal record.

As champions of children’s well-being for almost 60 years, we know that social and emotional learning has the power to change an entire school as well. When educators actively include social and emotional learning in their school environments, they see a reduction in school discipline problems and a higher level of teaching and work satisfaction for staff. The staff also enjoys shared language, concepts, and problem solving strategies that benefit children.

This year, continued collaboration with area leaders helped Children’s Institute to keep social and emotional learning in the forefront of important community initiatives.

Children’s Institute is one of the 50 organizations collaborating on ROC the Future, a community-wide initiative to support children, from cradle to career. Working with ABVI, Monroe Community College, Rochester Area Community Foundation, Rochester Hearing and Speech, St. John Fisher College, The Children’s Agenda, and United Way of Greater Rochester, we developed GROW-Rochester, a more comprehensive screening of three-year-olds to identify challenges in hearing, vision, dental, language and speech, cognitive, and social-emotional development. Funding from the City of Rochester, Greater Rochester Health Foundation, and United Way of Greater Rochester, among others, will bring this initiative to life. We also partnered with the Rochester City School District to target 13 schools to reduce chronic absenteeism by 10.7%.

To help reduce poverty by 50% by 2030, United Way of Greater Rochester convened the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative and invited Children’s Institute to collaborate. The goal is to design a comprehensive, integrated system of social supports for children and families to ensure that economic mobility is a reality for all in our community. With an extensive list of needs to cover—jobs, education and skills training, housing, transportation, child care, safe neighborhoods, judicial, health, and nutrition—there is much work to do.

...Collaborating with others to understand the difference strong social skills can make in the lives of children.
Evaluation makes a difference

“Primary Project is helping us to prevent absenteeism from becoming a chronic pattern.”

Ruth Turner
Director of School Counseling and Social Work,
Rochester City School District School #34
Making school the place children want to be every day

Student attendance is a priority at the Rochester City School District. Leaders in the district know that in order for students to learn, they have to be connected to their school environment. **Primary Project**, an evidence-based flagship program of Children’s Institute, uses child-led play to help children in pre-k through 3rd grade adjust to school, gain confidence, improve social skills, and focus on learning.

“We cannot improve student outcomes in the district if students are not in school,” said Ruth Turner, director of school counseling and social work at the Rochester City School District. “A student’s participation in Primary Project and its positive impact on the student’s attendance validates the value of Primary Project in helping us to prevent absenteeism from becoming a chronic pattern.”

Over the past four years, attendance of children enrolled in Primary Project demonstrated significant improvement. The overall daily attendance rate averaged 91% for these children, compared with 88% the year before they were in Primary Project.

Encouraged by the results, Children’s Institute and the Rochester City School District will continue to investigate the effects of Primary Project on children who are frequently absent from school.

**Coping Power**

This year Children’s Institute supported the Rochester City School District on the sustainability and expansion of Coping Power in five schools. Coping Power is a preventive intervention for 4th–6th grade children, based on observation or experience of risk factors for substance use and delinquency, that addresses social competence, self-regulation, and positive parental involvement.

The District is just one of the community partners that value the independent and objective way in which Children’s Institute collects and reports data to inform community, school, and program decisions that support positive child outcomes. Stakeholders in Rochester will benefit from this exchange of information with each other, as well as with other communities, thereby promoting our work locally and nationally.

**RECAP**

RECAP is a community-wide assessment partnership that utilizes expert assessment and evaluation by Children’s Institute to inform policies, develop sound practices, promote positive child outcomes, and improve program quality in our early childhood and educational community.

Last year, RECAP impacted over 2,600 Rochester children through the Rochester City School District’s use of RECAP data within its programming, instruction, and professional development efforts. The District also approved RECAP funding for the 2015–2016 academic year.

Outside of Rochester, schools in Chemung, Herkimer, and Oneida counties joined RECAP, which enabled Children’s Institute to assess approximately 1,900 additional children.
Is it possible to look into the future and predict whether a kindergartener will graduate from high school? Children’s Institute has found a way to do just that, and strong social and emotional skills are one of the main signs that point the way.

A suburban school district in Upstate New York provided Children’s Institute with 10 years of student data for its current 10th graders, as well as the district’s criteria for success. By combining the 10 years of information with advanced computing techniques made possible by an Impact Grant from IBM, we determined that social-emotional indicators were strongly predictive of academic outcome.

Knowing where children are headed early on because of the social and emotional indicators that appear as soon as pre-k, gives the district the opportunity to provide students with additional support to strengthen their skills, which can make all the difference in their success. Being able to predict with confidence what will happen next means that districts can make smarter decisions, solve problems early on, and support better student outcomes.

“We believe that this approach could be very valuable for other academic venues, potentially allowing early identification and remediation opportunities for academically at-risk students,” said Guillermo Montes, director of research and evaluation at Children’s Institute.

The school district, which has a longstanding relationship with Children’s Institute and utilizes many of its programs, including Primary Project, will explore ways to support its students through the use of predictive analytics.
Children making positive choices, appropriately expressing how they feel, and effectively managing their emotions; these are the signs of a healthy learning environment. This year, Children’s Institute worked with three early childhood centers in the City of Rochester to create such environments by providing them with Social and Emotional Learning Consultation, funded by the United Way of Greater Rochester.

Using the PATHS® curriculum, an evidence-based program that promotes emotional and social competencies and reduces aggression and behavior problems, Children’s Institute helped classroom teachers learn and integrate effective strategies to support the social-emotional health of the 260 children in their care.

“Without the behavioral health consultant, I’m not sure how we would have dealt with many of the children who come to us, as well as their parents and their teachers. Having a reliable expert to help the children sort out their feelings and find appropriate ways to cope with those feelings lends to a manageable classroom. The strategies provided to the teachers and parents help them understand and meet the children where they are, opening each child’s opportunities to socialize, learn, play, and grow,” said Ida Perez, director of children, youth, and emergency services at Ibero American Action League in Rochester.

Last year, 32 of the children required individualized behavioral health consultation services, provided by Children’s Institute.

The Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation and Rochester Area Community Foundation will provide additional funding for behavioral health consultation in early childhood centers for the 2015–2016 school year.
Screening children early for developmental challenges

ROC the Future strives to strengthen the cradle-to-career pipeline in the Rochester area, and Children’s Institute has been involved in many of its committees from the beginning.

Active in the School Readiness Network, Children’s Institute is at the forefront of developing GROW-Rochester, a comprehensive initiative that integrates screenings for three-year-olds to identify needs in hearing, vision, dental, language and speech, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

ROC the Future helped to secure $786,000 in funds for GROW-Rochester, set to launch in the fall of 2015. Over the next three years, the screenings will impact approximately 400, 800, and 1,200 children respectively and will support those who work with them by coordinating efforts to identify needs and connect families to services. With additional funding on the way, GROW-Rochester will be able to reach even more children.

To prepare, Children’s Institute with its partners addressed the many protocols and logistics needed for success. This included reaching out to community health care providers and other resources to explore ways to help with the recruitment of early childhood programs and family child care providers, developing training for screeners, and importing instrument-scoring rubrics into COMET.

Major funders for GROW-Rochester include Rochester’s Child, a fund through the Rochester Area Community Foundation, as well as the City of Rochester, Greater Rochester Health Foundation, New York State, and United Way of Greater Rochester.

Intrigued by the possibilities of GROW-Rochester, the United States Department of Health and Human Services continues to monitor this project as a model for possible implementation nationally.

Closing the achievement gap for low-income students

Is it possible to close the achievement gap for local low-income students by providing effective, tuition-free, evidence-based, summer learning and enrichment programs? Evaluation of summerLEAP (Summer Learning Enrichment to Achieve Potential) by Children’s Institute will help find answers.

SummerLEAP receives support from the Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association (GRSLA), a regional consortium of eight educational institutions including Harley School, University of Rochester, EnCompass Resources for Learning, Nazareth College, Monroe Community College, SUNY Geneseo, Allendale Columbia School, and SUNY Brockport. According to Conger Gable, CEO of GRSLA, “summer learning is a missing link that can bridge the gap between pre-k and reading by 3rd grade.”

Results from a 2014 pilot program for 48 incoming kindergarteners that participated in the 30-day program showed increases in students’ initiative and social capabilities, language and literacy skills, motor abilities, and mathematics and science skills. A more extensive program, serving 150 incoming kindergarten students, is planned for the summer of 2015, and will be independently evaluated by Children’s Institute.
Reducing obesity in children

The combined percentage of children who are either overweight or obese in the City of Rochester, NY is 38%; 21% are obese.* The Greater Rochester Health Foundation chose Children’s Institute to be its lead evaluation partner on the Childhood Healthy Weight Initiative, a multi-year project to reduce the incidence of obesity in elementary school students in nine Rochester schools. The Foundation hopes to glean valuable information as to the effectiveness of various aspects of locally designed and implemented obesity prevention efforts.

“Poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and obesity affects children’s cardiovascular health, muscles and bones, lung functioning, and hormones that manage blood sugar levels and puberty. It also carries long-term social and emotional consequences,” said Dr. Stephen Cook from Golisano Children’s Hospital. “There is also a direct link between obesity in childhood to also having obesity as an adult, which leads to more serious health issues earlier in life.”

Using various measures to collect feedback from principals, teachers, cafeteria staff, students, and parents, Children’s Institute’s preliminary findings for the 2014–2015 school year—the second year of the Initiative—support a pattern of continued growth in program awareness and implementation in the participating schools and at home. Highlights include:

- Schools removed vending machines from cafeterias and installed salad bars and ways for students to have access to water that meet health and safety standards, thanks to advocacy activities by Healthi Kids.
- 3rd–6th grade students self-reported that they are eating less fried foods, fries, soda, and other sweetened beverages; candy and desserts; as well as spending less time in front of a computer or TV screen.

Next year this evaluation will assist the Greater Rochester Health Foundation in determining what programs are viable and effective.

Assessing the effectiveness of after school programs

Youth and after-school program assessments support quality improvement initiatives that promote children’s development and social-emotional health. As a lead agency in the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA), funded by the Rochester Area Community Foundation, Children’s Institute completed another year of the multi-year evaluation to measure program quality.

After trained observers completed the program observation process throughout the City of Rochester, Children’s Institute shared the data with coaches and program staff for support and quality improvement plans.

In addition, Children’s Institute planned and implemented the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA mini) to screen approximately 600 youth for potential social-emotional risk.

*Dr. Stephen Cook, personal communication, November 2015.
Children’s Institute is grateful for the generous support of foundations, corporations, and individuals as we address issues that impact the lives of young children in our community and beyond. Thank you for your commitment to Children’s Institute as we work towards achieving our vision to positively impact the social and emotional health of one million children by 2020.

Champions $5,000 and up
- Ronald H. Fielding
- Richard and Vicki Schwartz
- Bob and Jan Silver

Believers $1,000 and up
- Anonymous
- Harry and Nancy Beilfuss
- Nancy and Joe Briggs
- Ann Pinnella Brown
- John and Donna DePeters
- Richard Finkelstein and Meredith Fox
- Richard and Malinda Fischer
- Carol Rice Gravetter
- Eleonore and John Herman

Supporters $500 and up
- Linda and A. Dirk Hightower
- Leo and Charlotte Landhuis
- Jim and Kathleen Leo
- Jim and Jane Litwitz
- Barbara Purvis
- Geoffrey and Janet Rosenberger
- Suzanne and Ted Spall
- Connie Valk

Friends
- Anonymous
- Dennis and Barbara Asselin
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- Maresha Dumka
- Helen Elam
- Charles and Naomi Erdman
- Mr. and Dr. Oliver and Gail Ferguson
- Stephen Fielding, Ph.D.

“I have a stake in the future of children. Before I became a Children’s Institute staff member, I worked in the Rochester City Schools where I was the recipient of Children’s Institute’s services. I’ve seen the good work that the organization accomplishes from the outside in as well as inside out. With a Designated Endowment Fund, I am able to leave a lasting legacy that will help Children’s Institute accomplish its mission for generations to come.”

Connie Valk—Retired from Children’s Institute in 2012 where she developed Pathways: National Early Education and Care Accreditation
John and Suzanne Fitzgerald  
Jonathan D. Foster  
Marion Fox  
Teale and Gregory Fox  
Bob and Patricia Garrow  
Julia Garver and Joseph Ruh  
Kenneth Goode  
Susan Phillips Gorin  
Richard and Marilyn Hare  
Tessa Harris and Kristina Kemm  
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David and Cheddy Harvey  
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Deborah Johnson  
Lillian Johnson  
The Shipley-Kaczorowski Family  
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William and Barbara Pulsifer  
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Special gifts in memory of:
Corene Lee Blair  
Rhonda Eggert  
Gary Lazenby  
Kay and Dick Leary  
Ethel Lee  
Nicol Ranalletta  
Janice Thornton  
Gannon Werner

Special gifts in honor of:
Fernán Cepero  
Sharon Conheady  
Carolee Conklin  
Sid Fox  
Deborah Johnson  
David Pieramico  
Robert Ulliman

Gifts in kind:
Gordon McNeill  
IBM Impact Grant  
Logical Operations  
Wegmans

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. If your name has been omitted, misspelled, or listed incorrectly, please accept our apologies and bring the error to our attention so we can correct our records. Gifts received after June 30, 2015 will be recognized in our 2015-2016 annual report. Thank you.
Children’s Institute is in good hands, thanks to the loyalty and dedication of our Board of Directors. Each member brings a wealth of skills and knowledge to the table to help us with strategic planning as well as serving as an ambassador for our organization in the community. Thank you for your service.

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**2014-2015**

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Committee(s): Finance, Nominating

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Honorary Member
Marjorie Allan, Lynn Smith, and Jeff Kaczorowski met with staff from Chicago Public Schools to hear about social-emotional programming for their students. (August 2014)

A. Dirk Hightower, executive director, presented at the District Rotary Literacy Seminar, attended by 90+ Rotarians from a 10 county area in Clifton Springs, NY. (September 2014)

Guillermo Montes, director of research and evaluation, and Jill Halterman, medical director, presented “Characteristics of children whose parents report they no longer have autism spectrum disorder (ASD)” at the 5th Congress of the European Academy of Pediatric Societies in Barcelona, Spain. (October 2014)

Kim Avery, early care and education specialist, presented “The Stage of Change model of professional development” at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) annual conference in Dallas, TX. (November 2014)

Edy Zordan, school psychologist, presented “A system of supports to promote social-emotional development of young children in child care settings” at the New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP) conference in Albany, NY. (November 2014)

Deborah Johnson, director of programs and services, was named as Athena Award finalist. (January 2015)

The Children’s Institute website was selected as a finalist in the Rochester Business Journal’s “Best of the Web” competition–Digital Rochester’s Business Transformation Award category. (March 2015)

Spots aired on WXXI AM radio 1370 to help increase awareness about Children’s Institute. (April 2015)

Thanks to funding from the American Legion, ESL, and Tompkins Charitable Trust, the “Possibilities of Play: Building Connections DVD” was distributed to schools, veteran’s organizations, and Boys and Girls Clubs around the country–webinars on children and play were also presented. (April 2015)

Dan Draper, longtime Children’s Institute supporter and consultant, was named as 2015 ESL Jefferson Award Winner. (April 2015)

Children’s Institute sent a work team to Foodlink to help sort food as part of the 2015 United Way Day of Caring. (May 2015)

Children’s Institute geared up for the fall fundraiser KIDS & TRUCKS, a family-friendly event that allows children and adults to experience all different kinds of vehicles up close. (May 2015)

Children’s Institute staff and board members gathered in the Village Gate for a group picture. (June 2015)

Ellen Leopold, education consultant, was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by Ibero Early Childhood Services in recognition of her valuable contributions. (June 2015)

The Rochester City School District Primary Project program held an end of the year celebration at Buckland Lodge. Social workers and child associates gathered to celebrate the year’s accomplishments. (June 2015)
Financial Report
for year ended 6/30/15

REVENUES & GAINS
Government $1,143,609
Sales/fee for service/other $ 774,742
Foundations/United Way $ 762,793
Charitable giving $ 126,789
Investment & interest gains $ 124,979
Total Revenues $2,932,912

EXPENSES & LOSSES
National services (incl pass thru) $ 917,553
Research & development (incl COMET) $ 718,061
Community partnerships $ 474,251
Finance & administration $ 540,914
Business services & communications $ 258,638
Fundraising $ 117,314
Depreciation & amortization $ 13,715
Total Expenses $3,040,446

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS $ (107,534)

CLOSING NET ASSETS $2,592,524

Children’s Institute’s financial statements are audited by Mengel, Metzger, Barr & Co., LLP, Certified Public Accountants and can be viewed at www.childrensinstitute.net/donate.
By 2020, we will positively impact the social and emotional health of one million children. Children’s Institute equips and supports those who work with children to ensure the success of every child. We do this through thoughtful research and evaluation, the ongoing development of proven prevention programs, and collaboration with community partners who care about children as much as we do.

Our vision is to positively impact the social and emotional health of one million children by 2020. This year, we reached more than 118,000 children, bringing us closer to making our vision a reality.

This annual report shares how Children’s Institute collaborated with many community partners to help to make a visible difference in the lives of children.
STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

274 N. Goodman Street, Suite D103
Rochester, New York 14607