


Kennedy Child Study Center
where every child matters

Annual Report

2016



Letter from the KCSC Board Chair and Executive Director



Dear Friends,

As we look back to 2016 at the Kennedy Child Study Center (KCSC), we are reflecting upon several challenges and victories which now leave KCSC well-poised to better serve preschoolers with special needs. Last year, we realized lasting educational and fiscal benefits from eliminating programs that were under-funded and under-enrolled, updating staffing patterns, and consolidating site locations. In addition, our intensive work with the New York State Education Department has successfully led to multi-year rate appeals to increase the tuition rate for students enrolled in our full day preschool program.



Today, KCSC is better able than ever before to provide mandated services to a growing population of young children with special needs. Our staff is dedicated to working with some of NYC's most at-risk families and developing programs that meet the educational and therapeutic needs of children, while attending to other social issues that their families face each day. Given our successful rate appeals, careful attention to annual budgets, and increased success with private foundations and fundraising, KCSC is on track to provide steady and consistent services to communities where the need is great.

The commitment of our Board and staff has never been more important. We will continue to cultivate new friends and donors in 2017 so that the generosity shown to KCSC will continue to flourish. Our affiliation with Catholic Charities continues to provide KCSC with leadership and guidance. We have a renewed sense of purpose as we bring awareness to our community partners regarding our mandated and necessary services. As we re-affirm our commitment to the communities we serve, we are working more closely with our legislators through the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, as well as a growing number of private funders.

While there are obstacles in the non-profit sector, management to and around them will set KCSC on a path of solvency as we approach our 60th year of service to children and families in New York City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O'Connor".

Michael O'Connor, Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeanne Alter".

Jeanne Alter, Executive Director

Our Mission

Kennedy Child Study Center's mission is to assist children who experience significant delays in learning and other areas of early childhood development.

We accomplish this mission by:

- Providing evaluation and diagnosis, comprehensive therapy, and high-quality preschool education to young children with delays in learning and other areas of development;
- Advancing the holistic well-being of the families we serve through family support, including Medicaid Service Coordination, and information on healthy living and accessing community resources;
- Advocating for public policies that benefit young children with developmental delays, and developing programs to meet the changing needs of our families; and,
- Reinforcing best practices in early childhood special education through ongoing professional development for educators, therapists, and others working in the field.



Our Impact

In 2016, KCSC reached over 600 children ages three to five with a confirmed delay in one or more areas of early childhood development. Among our students:

- Over 85% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch.
- Nearly 50% exhibit significant Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) characteristics.
- 31% are from bilingual homes.



Kindergarten Readiness:

The primary focus of early childhood special education at KCSC is to prepare our early learners for kindergarten. Each year, KCSC graduates at least 50% of our population to the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) while matriculating the other half to their second year at KCSC. Our children attend their community schools in a variety of kindergarten placements that meet each child's individual needs in the Least Restrictive Setting.

A Strong Foundation

Evaluations *A Critical First Step*

When a young child has a possible developmental delay, The NYCDOE refers families to programs like KCSC to conduct developmental evaluations to determine eligibility for services based on guidelines set by the New York State Education Department. Evaluation results are reviewed by the NYCDOE Committee on Preschool Education to recommend the appropriate education and therapy services to meet the learning needs of the child.

Last year, KCSC provided over 100 evaluations in English and Spanish to young children up to age 5 with suspected developmental delays. Led by our Intake and Enrollment Coordinator, a psychologist, and a comprehensive team of speech, occupational, and physical therapists, evaluations provide a crucial first step towards assisting families in understanding and advocating for the needs of their children.

Reaching over 400 children ages 3-5 with developmental delays each year, KCSC's special education preschool program prepares students to enter the New York City public school system in the least restrictive environment possible. Our curriculum is informed by the latest advances in early childhood special education and neuroscience, and is aligned with the New York State Pre-Kindergarten Foundation for the Common Core.

Special Education Preschool *Lessons to Last a Lifetime*



Our 36 classes are small and highly structured, with only 6, 8 or 12 students in each classroom. Each classroom has one early childhood special education teacher and two certified teacher assistants. The IEP (Individual Education Plan), created from the results of the evaluations, provides teachers and therapists with specific and individualized goals and objectives for each child. This highly individualized approach to learning allows our staff to differentiate the curriculum to the learning needs of each child.

By providing a culturally sensitive, child-centered special education program, KCSC encourages substantial, lifelong improvements in a child's social, educational, and emotional development at a pivotal age.

A Strong Foundation

Related Therapy Services *Developing Core Skills*

KCSC provides comprehensive related therapy services in all areas of development, including individual and group speech therapy, occupational, physical therapy and psychological counseling. Related Services are part of the child's mandated IEP and services are recommended as part of the overall approach to assisting the child reach, retain and maintain skills in all areas of development.

- Speech Therapy helps children develop and improve their receptive and expressive communication and language skills.
- Occupational Therapy (OT) assists children with fine motor skills such as dressing, feeding, and writing, as well as with sensory integration.
- Physical therapy (PT) engages children in movement and play to strengthen their skills in walking, sitting, and maintaining balance.
- Psychology/counseling assists children with behavioral difficulties by providing teaching staff and parents with positive behavior support ideas to use at home and in the community.



KCSC's support for families continues long after a child graduates from our preschool and attends public school through our Medicaid Service Coordination (MSC) program. KCSC provides referrals to afterschool and respite programs, in-home crisis and mental health intervention for children and families, and comprehensive counseling services for almost 100 children with developmental delays ages 3-18.

Medicaid Service Coordination *Continuing Support*

Enrichment Programming

In addition to our mandated classroom and therapy services, KCSC organizes **engaging** and **educational** programs that help build our students' emotional, social and physical skills. These enrichment activities include:

- Visits from New York Therapy Animals;
- Yoga through Bent On Learning;
- Dance through Alvin Ailey; and
- Art programming with All Abilities.



KCSC places great value on our **community partnerships** and works with organizations across the city to bring exciting, high quality programs to our students that promote experimentation and creativity.



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Support

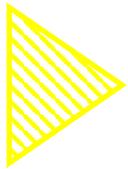
Of our nearly 400 students, almost 50% exhibit ASD characteristics. Our teachers are trained in the latest ASD techniques, such as TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children) - an evidence-based service, training, and research program for individuals with ASD. Our teaching staff address the specific intellectual, social and emotional needs of our students through the use of visual learning aids and other methods shown to improve behavior and outcomes.



Rafaelina, whose five-year old daughter has both Autism Spectrum Disorder and diabetes, attended KCSC for two years. She spoke regarding Valeria's experience at KCSC:

I realized coming to Kennedy that we work as a team. You create all these things specifically for my child, but I can also take the ideas home and bring structure to my house. I am very, very thankful for all of you.

- Rafaelina, mother of a former KCSC student



Beyond the Classroom: Family Services at KCSC



Our **Family Services Program** is dedicated to providing support and training for parents/caregivers to help meet the unique demands of raising a child with special needs. We provide parents with opportunities to participate in their child's education, help them understand their child's needs, and support them through their parenting journey. Last year, we offered:

- **Family workshops** on a range of topics including educational advocacy, behavior management, toilet training, transitioning to kindergarten, speech and communication, sensory integration and resources for children with disabilities. There is also specialized training for parents of children with autism. All workshops are presented bilingually and are either led by Kennedy Staff or by outside agencies. Participation in workshops has increased markedly and attendance has included more than 25% of our families. Some parents boast that they have not missed a workshop! By utilizing these services, parents show that they feel welcomed and valued in our school community.
- **Parent Support Groups** are a vital program component, providing a place for our families to meet and talk about their shared challenges.
- **Family Events** occur throughout the school year. This year we honored Down Syndrome Acceptance Month by hosting a Music and Movement Playgroup for our students with Down Syndrome and their families. One parent expressed gratitude for realizing that "we are all in the same situation and our children are so similar."

One mother said "I used to blame myself and think I was the only one, but now I know otherwise."



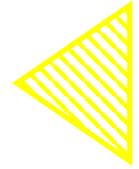
Families participate in an event led by Gigi's Playhouse, an organization that advocates for children with Down Syndrome.



Families and staff create weighted toys for children with sensory challenges.



Beyond the Classroom: Family Services at KCSC

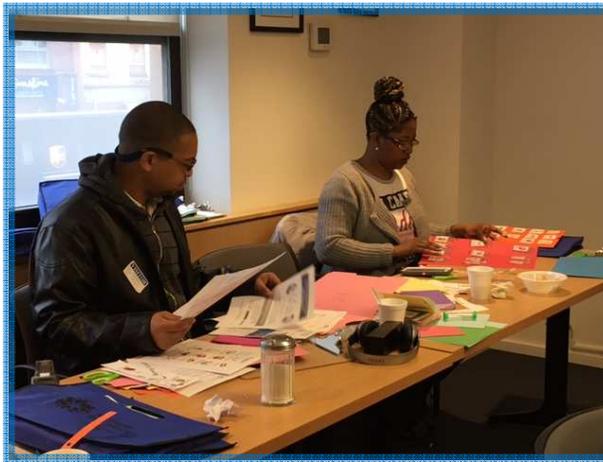


Our mission of supporting young children with special needs and their families extends beyond the classroom in many ways:

- Our **Family Support Coordinators** are an integral part of family services and help parents with individual needs, referrals to community resources, and an array of special disability services and benefits.
- This past year we launched our first **Annual Family Resource Fair**. It was attended by 15 community-based agencies who provided information on site directly to our families and staff. We collaborated with partner organizations like Ramapo for Children, the NYC Early Childhood Direction Center, YAI (Young Adult Institute), and others to supplement our internal programs.
- Through our **Kindergarten Application Assistance Program**, our Family Support Coordinators helped over 75% of our parents apply for kindergarten, with additional computers designated exclusively for parent use.



Families browse information and speak to staff at KCSC's annual open house.



Parents learn to make visual supports to help their children communicate, follow routines, and understand directions at home.



Families and students "pick" pumpkins from our lobby pumpkin patch during the annual Fall Festival.

Meet Our Families: New York Times Neediest Cases Campaign

As an affiliated agency of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, KCSC was honored to participate in the New York Times Neediest Cases Campaign, which raises money and awareness for New Yorkers in need. This year, two KCSC families whose struggles and triumphs embody our belief that every child matters were highlighted in the series.

Raising 2 Young Children by Herself, in a Space That Feels Not Big Enough

The Neediest Cases

By MASHA GONCHAROVA NOV. 30, 2016

In her cramped apartment in Upper Manhattan, Paola Infante cooked chicken and rice on a gas stove, stirring the meal as she kept an eye on her daughter, Geraliz, racing around the room. Each time the girl came near the flames and kitchen knives, Ms. Infante used her body to gently push her away.

Geraliz, who is 4 and has autism, eventually distracted herself watching children's shows on a pink-covered iPad. For the moment, the possibility that she might get hurt had passed.

"So much nervousness," Ms. Infante, 27, said in Spanish. "I wish for a bigger apartment with all of my soul. A separate kitchen, this is all I need." She added, "There's been a lot of breaks and spills."

Almost every surface in the small one-bedroom apartment doubles as a space for something else: pots and pans on top of magazines, children's toys atop cleaning supplies and food wrappers. With no formal kitchen area, a gas stove, a refrigerator and cabinets line the 12-foot-by-15-foot living room's back wall.

Ms. Infante, who immigrated from the Dominican Republic, is raising Geraliz and her 8-month-old son, Joshua, by herself. Geraliz communicates in screeches and tugs at her mother. Joshua was born with a deformed heart, but will not be healthy enough for heart-valve surgery until he turns 1 in April.

Ms. Infante said the children's father, her former boyfriend, had moved out because he did not feel that he could cope with the challenges involved in raising Geraliz.

"He couldn't handle it emotionally," she said as she sat in one of the apartment's only chairs, a tiny seat for her children. "It was too much for him to accept."

During the day, Ms. Infante works as a cashier at a Key Food grocery store, earning \$800 a month and struggling because of her limited ability to speak English to earn a promotion. She said she did not want to depend on public assistance but had to, collecting about \$1,050 a month combined in food stamps and disability benefits.

At night, almost everything is a chore. While she prepares dinner or cleans the apartment, she tries to distract Geraliz with the iPad while hoping that Joshua does not start to cry. Doing the laundry meant lugging the dirty clothes to a laundromat two blocks away with the children in tow. To save money on drying, she would carry the wet clothes back to her fifth-floor walk-up and hang them on a line in the hallway leading into the apartment.

That cumbersome task was recently made easier. Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New York, one of the eight organizations supported by The New York Times's [Neediest Cases](#) Fund, gave her \$350 toward



Paola Infante with her daughter, Geraliz, and her son, Joshua, in their apartment in Upper Manhattan. "I wish for a bigger apartment with all of my soul," she said. "A separate kitchen, this is all I need." Credit Angel Franco/The New York Times

a \$800 washing machine and helped to have it installed in her apartment. Ms. Infante still line-dries the clothes.

It has also become less stressful to make sure that her children are safe while she is at work. Catholic Charities guided Ms. Infante to enroll Geraliz at the Kennedy Child Study Center, an affiliate agency that provides free services for children with developmental challenges. Ms. Infante said her daughter was getting better at communicating and, with the help of workers at the center, had learned how to grab ahold of her when she needed attention.

The center also helped Ms. Infante enroll in English classes at the City College of New York, which start in February. She said she wanted to earn a bachelor's degree in childhood education and get a job as a teacher within five years.

For those plans to work out, she will need to find a babysitter for Joshua by the time classes begin. The center is also helping her make those arrangements.

Ms. Infante said that her former boyfriend was still around. He lives in a separate apartment in Upper Manhattan, works at another grocery store and pays the rent on Ms. Infante's place. He visits the children "once or twice a week" at their apartment, she said, but she is not ready to welcome him back full time.

"I don't need anyone or anything," she said, rising quickly to stir the rice and check on the chicken. "I'm fine. What I need is a separate kitchen so I can cook without worrying about the kids."

Donations to the Neediest Cases may also be made with [a check or over the phone](#).

A version of this article appears in print on December 1, 2016, on Page A26 of the New York edition with the headline: Raising 2 Children With High Needs, in a Space That Doesn't Feel Big Enough.

Meet Our Families: New York Times Neediest Cases Campaign

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The Glorious Achievement of Zipping Up a Sweatshirt

The Neediest Cases

By JACLYN PEISER NOV. 24, 2016

Jose Alvarez has trouble sleeping. It is the pain from his back injury. It is the stress of paying the bills. It is the worry that his daughter will never live a normal life.

Mr. Alvarez's life changed in 2005, when a car backed into him on 24th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues in Manhattan. Mr. Alvarez, now 63, was working as a boiler mechanic and welder at a few buildings on the street. Since the injury, he has been unable to work, because of herniated disks in his back.

A quick jerk or movement sends Mr. Alvarez into excruciating pain. Without a job, he relies on his mechanical worker's pension and Social Security disability benefits.

"I don't feel like a man anymore," he said. "I don't have a lot of movement, and the doctor says I should not pick up any more than 12 pounds."

His limited mobility has proved especially difficult because his 4-year-old daughter, Kenerly, has Down syndrome.

Kenerly was born in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. When Mr. Alvarez and his wife, Yuny, found out that she had Down syndrome, they were shocked and devastated.

"I cried," Ms. Alvarez, 41, said. "I knew something was wrong when they didn't bring me the baby right away."

The parents knew they would need to move to New York, where they would have access to better health care for Kenerly.

The problem was getting into the country. For years, Mr. Alvarez, who had initially moved to New York to work and send money back to his family, tried to gain entry for his wife, whom he had met during one of his trips home. But immigration authorities questioned the legitimacy of their marriage, until January 2014, when the couple was able to move to New York, Mr. Alvarez said.

Leaving their entire support system behind in the Dominican Republic, Ms. Alvarez and Kenerly moved into Mr. Alvarez's home, which was the back half of a fourth-floor walk-up apartment in Washington Heights, in Upper Manhattan. The family owns the back bedroom and living room but shares a kitchen with live-in neighbors.

For the first few years of his daughter's life, Mr. Alvarez was Kenerly's primary caretaker during the day because his wife works as a home attendant. With Mr. Alvarez injured and Kenerly struggling to walk and climb stairs, father and daughter had to stay inside until Ms. Alvarez returned home.



Jose and Yuny Alvarez with their daughter, Kenerly, in their home in Manhattan. Credit Elias Williams for The New York Times

Everyday tasks, such as changing her diaper and feeding Kenerly, are a struggle. She is not fully potty-trained and still uses diapers. It is difficult for Mr. Alvarez to lift her onto the toilet, and for a while she would use the bathtub instead. "I do things even though it's hard," he said.

Unable to lift her into a highchair, Mr. Alvarez had to improvise. "It was hard for me to pick her up," he said. "So I had to teach her how to get up there by herself."

But Mr. Alvarez had help teaching his daughter to climb into the chair. In September last year, the family found [Kennedy Child Study Center](#), an agency affiliated with the [Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York](#). Kenerly, who receives physical and occupational therapy through the center, which helps children with developmental delays, is learning to climb stairs and can now use a spoon to feed herself.

"It takes a lot of pressure off me having the school and feeling like I'm not the only person who can take care of my child," Mr. Alvarez said.

But with the added costs of Kenerly's diapers and food, he still worries about paying the bills and even the rent. The couple receives about \$2,500 a month total in benefits and in Ms. Alvarez's pay.

"Sometimes we have to be late on the rent," Mr. Alvarez said. "It's hard, but we have to do it."

Catholic Charities, one of the eight organizations supported by The New York Times's Neediest Cases Fund, used \$297 to pay for diapers, wipes and clothes for Kenerly.

Kenerly, sporting her new pink-with-white-hearts Minnie Mouse zip-up sweatshirt, showed off her newfound skills by unzipping the jacket, something she was unable to do until she started going to Kennedy Child Study Center. She then went straight into the bedroom and emerged with her mother's make-up. She climbed up on the reclining chair and began to apply it to her face.

"She's a very special child," Ms. Alvarez said. "She has a lot of personality."

But Mr. Alvarez still worries about Kenerly as she grows up. "Will she be able to work? Make money? I often can't sleep thinking about this," he said. "Will she ever get married? Have children?"

Kenerly is drawn to her father. It is as though being stuck in their apartment all that time allowed them to form a particularly close bond. She often climbs out of her crib near her parents' bed and over her mother and snuggles up next to her father.

"I love her so much," Mr. Alvarez said, holding back tears. "You can't imagine how much I love her. I have her in my heart and soul."

Donations to the Neediest Cases may also be made with a check or over the phone.

Our Financial Highlights

[July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016]

Agency Revenue

Service Fees from Government Contracts	\$14,736,491
Government Grants	\$380,983
Contributions and Grants \$	\$583,182
Investment Income	\$3,325

Total Revenue **\$15,703,981**

Agency Expenses

Salaries	\$8,983,596
Employee Benefits	\$2,134,059
Contracted Health Services	\$1,805,550
Rent, Utilities, Program & Other Supplies	\$1,378,603
Other Expenses	\$1,611,929

Total Expenses **\$15,913,737**

Surplus (Deficit) **(\$209,756)¹**

¹KCSC's deficit reflects on-going rate methodology problems noted by the New York State Education Department. There have been two 2% growth factors assessed in the past two years and six years of no growth prior to that. KCSC works closely with NYSED on tuition waivers (rate appeals) to increase tuition revenue. To date, we have successfully increased retroactive rates for 2012-13 and 2013-14. Our 2014-15 rate increase is pending (as of May 2017).

KCSC Management

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Kennedy Child Study Center
where every child matters

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Kennedy Child Study Center is a proud affiliate of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York

