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2025 ANNUAL REPORT

learning grove

A Letter from Our CEO

Dear Friends,

This year reminded us what becomes possible when people come together around a shared belief in children, youth, and families.

Across Learning Grove, we saw that belief turn into action. Children explored new spaces designed to spark curiosity and confidence. Families found trusted partners ready to listen and respond. Young people discovered new pathways to college and careers. Schools, businesses, funders, volunteers, and community organizations brought their expertise and resources to the table.

These accomplishments belong to all of us.

As Learning Grove approaches 50 years of service, we remain focused on what has always mattered most: creating high-quality learning experiences, building strong partnerships, and responding to what our community needs next.

We are grateful to every family who trusts us, every educator who brings our mission to life, and every partner and supporter who makes this work possible.

We have much to celebrate, and even more to build together.

With gratitude,

Shannon Starkey-Taylor
Chief Executive Officer
Learning Grove

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Drew Tilow, Past President
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Early Childhood Education:
Building the Foundation for Lifelong Success

Learning Grove has a long history of recognizing the critical role social and emotional development plays in a child's success. Now, more than ever, we believe it is time to deepen that commitment.

As the push for "kindergarten readiness" increasingly emphasizes academic skills, we risk losing sight of the foundation children need to succeed in school and throughout their lives. A child who does not feel safe, nurtured, connected, and empowered cannot fully engage in the critical thinking, problem-solving, curiosity, and relationships that make learning possible. Social and emotional development is not separate from school readiness; it makes readiness possible.

In 2025, Learning Grove and Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency (CAA) renewed their investment in supporting the whole child through intensive training and coaching provided by the Hanna Perkins Center for Child Development. The work builds on a partnership that began more than 20 years ago, when Hanna Perkins' relationship-based approach helped shape Learning Grove's understanding of children's social and emotional development and their rich inner lives.

The initiative began with 53 hours of training and coaching in 2025, with 50 additional hours planned for 2026. More than 69 directors, teachers, coaches, and organizational leaders will participate.

Early Childhood Education Outcomes

School Age Services:
A Community That Shows Up

At College Hill Academy, Learning Grove's School Age Services team spent the year turning relationships into action.

For Kyrie, progress looked like a fist bump. He had typically avoided mascots, but when Miss Piggy from the Flying Pig Marathon visited, encouragement from his teacher and paraprofessional support staff gave him the confidence to say hello. A month later, he eagerly posed for a photo with the UC Bearcat. A small moment showed just how much trust and patience can build.

Older adult volunteers have become special friends and trusted fixtures throughout the school. Students race to read with "Grandma Mildred" and make cards for "Grandma Blair" when she misses a day. Their warmth, patience and consistency make a meaningful difference for students and teachers alike.

Community partners stepped up, too. More than 50 Shoes4theShoeless volunteers fitted students with new shoes and socks. Summer students made weekly walks to Ohio Living Llanfair to read, visit, and build relationships with residents.

The team also launched the Cougar Bodega, a stigma-free, on-site pantry stocked with food, diapers, and household essentials. Families can stop by at dismissal and take what they need.

These efforts look different, but they share a purpose: *build trust, remove barriers, and give children and families a community they can count on.*

Kentucky School Age Services + FamiliesFORWARD

1,431 served
79% living in low-income households

91% of youth demonstrated social and emotional skills necessary for success

96% of families in Kentucky School Age programs reported they are able to work/seek employment because of after-school program

96% of families in FamiliesFORWARD reported learning about their child's strengths and needs

College & Career Prep:
Creating Pathways to Possibility

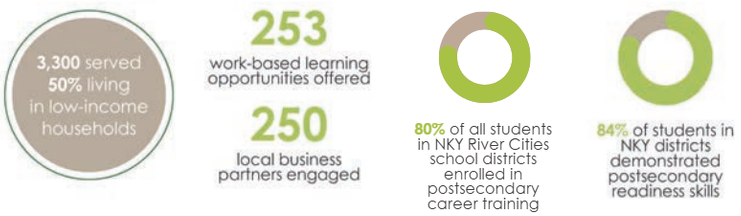
In late 2025, Learning Grove's NaviGo team partnered with UpSpring to launch Pathways to Success, a new initiative that helps middle and high school students experiencing homelessness prepare for college, careers, and life after graduation. Together, the organizations developed a specialized curriculum that combines career exploration, college planning, academic support, and trauma-informed practices to help students build confidence, discover their strengths, and prepare for what's next.

UpSpring pathways to success

The partnership reflects a shared belief that every young person deserves access to meaningful opportunities, regardless of their circumstances. By combining UpSpring's expertise in supporting students experiencing homelessness with Learning Grove's leadership in college and career readiness, Pathways to Success provides individualized guidance that helps students envision a future filled with possibility.

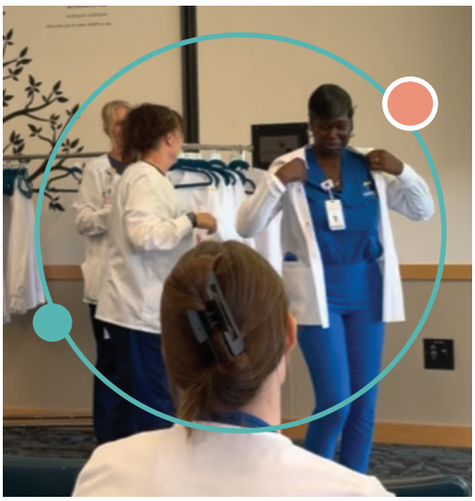
Together, Learning Grove and UpSpring are creating new pathways to education, employment, and long-term stability for students who deserve every opportunity to succeed.

NaviGo College and Career Prep Outcomes



Family & Community Services:
Growing Stronger Together

Learning Grove believes every child deserves the opportunity to thrive. That starts by building trusted relationships with families and providing support that extends beyond the classroom.



One mother enrolled her two youngest children at our Future Environments Early Learning Center in Clifton while working to create a brighter future for her family. As a busy single mother raising three young children - two with autism - and pursuing her nursing career, she had a lot competing for her time and attention. Our Family Services team continued reaching out and offering diapers, food, and encouragement. By meeting her where she was, we gave the relationship time and space to grow.

That trust opened new doors.

The family received support through our holiday gift program. When the mother shared that she was struggling in a required chemistry course for nursing school, Learning Grove connected her with a volunteer tutor. She earned an A and was accepted into a registered nursing program.

When she needed a laptop to begin classes, Learning Grove provided one. Today, she is on track to complete her nursing degree in 2027.

Her story reflects what family support looks like at Learning Grove. We meet families where they are, respond to their individual needs, and celebrate every milestone they achieve.

Family and Community Outreach Services Outcomes

95 family engagement opportunities reached 142 families

140 children received a comprehensive vision or developmental screening, 37 referred for glasses or additional services

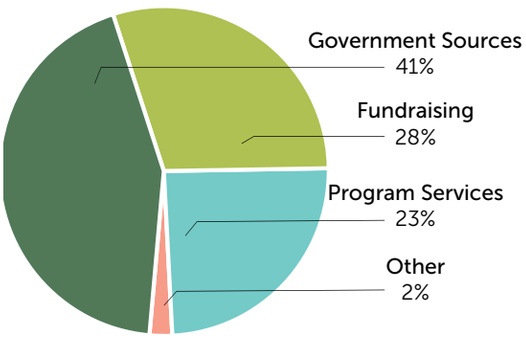
71 children were connected to a quality early childhood education program

172 basic needs supports were provided to families, including assistance with food, clothing, transportation, furniture, and car seats

90,000 diapers distributed in partnership with Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank

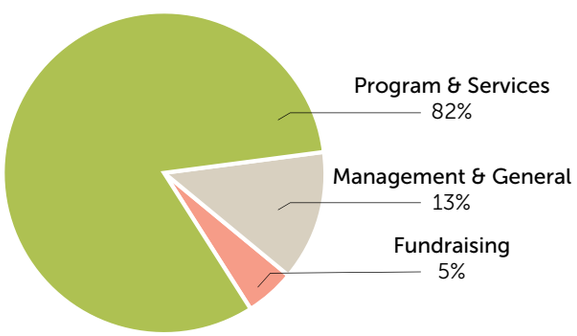
2025
Financial Information

REVENUE



TOTAL REVENUE: $17,793,673

EXPENSES



TOTAL EXPENSES: $17,556,890

NET ASSETS: $7,749,951

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2025 Funding Highlights: Our Funders Invest Where it Matters Most

Trust That Fuels Impact

Learning Grove is proud and grateful to have continued as a United Way funded partner in 2025. Their ongoing investment reflects deep trust in our work and a shared commitment to helping children, youth and families across our region thrive.

UNITED WAY Greater Cincinnati | Funded Partner

Helping Every Young Person Thrive

Greater Cincinnati Foundation awarded Learning Grove $50,000 through its 2025 Building Bright Futures initiative to support our Early Learning to Career Readiness work.

Future of Manufacturing Fund | Year II

In 2025, Learning Grove joined five regional partners for Year II of United Way of Greater Cincinnati's Future of Manufacturing Fund, in partnership with GE Aerospace Foundation. The cohort provided $50,000 in funding and technical support to help Learning Grove strengthen and expand our college & career prep work, connecting more students with advanced manufacturing careers through hands-on exploration, mentoring and work-based learning.

Other 2025 Highlights

When Students Lead, We Listen

In 2025, Learning Grove and A Picture's Worth brought students and community leaders together through *Widening the Lens* at Withrow University High School. Through this program, students led candid conversations with leaders from business, education, nonprofits, government, and the community. They shared their experiences, raised the issues that mattered to them, and challenged adults to listen before offering solutions. The conversations at Withrow built relationships that extended beyond the room and reinforced a simple principle: young people deserve a central role in shaping the future of their communities.

A Swinging Good Time in Support of Learning Grove

More than 100 golfers swung up to Devou Park Golf Course and Event Center to raise money for the Monica Hughes Henke Children's Fund at the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, which directly supports Learning Grove. The Monica Hughes Henke Golf Outing raised more than $16,000 through registration, sponsorship, tutu swings, raffles and other fundraising touchpoints at the event.

We are deeply grateful to the Hughes and Henke families for carrying on this wonderful tradition, and to the outing's generous sponsors.

School Age Services 2025 summer campers
at Cincinnati Nature Center

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learning-grove.org

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