

2023

FOCUSEDKIDS ANNUAL REPORT



FocusedKids
BRAIN EMPOWERMENT

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A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AMANDA PETERSEN, M.A.

Welcome to year ten at FocusedKids.

When I reflect on 2023, our main highlights resulted from many collaborative efforts. As you review our annual report, you'll recognize a great deal of them.



Last year, during our programming enhancements, we rebranded the organization. We worked with our marketing lead, Shayla Groves, who took us through a process that landed us with our new logo, fonts, and colors. We are excited that our updated look projects more inclusivity for the growing populations we serve including educators, parents and children of all ethnicities. I hope you like our updated look and feel; we're getting a lot of positive feedback.

On a personal note, in January of 2023, I had the opportunity to meet Bessel Van der Kolk when he spoke at the Aspen Winter Words series. Van der Kolk is a pioneer in the study of childhood trauma and the brain. We regularly use his research when coaching parents, teachers, and students. His words emphasized the necessity of safety in all relationships. We were proud of how perfectly his message aligned with our daily work at FocusedKids. Exchanging words with such a respected practitioner will have a lasting impact on FocusedKids and the individuals we work with. As Bessel had told me before I walked away giddily, "You are doing the work that needs to be done."

Here's to healthy brains and a great 2024!

A NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDER

KATHY HEGBERG, M.A.



Have you noticed that many people around us struggle to settle into an increasingly chaotic world? Last year, I talked about the amygdala, what causes our brain to go on alert, the consequences of alert on our neurobiological systems, and the beauty of the resilience we see with FocusedKids.

What keeps adults from reaching a more sane place in our daily world? I'll tell you a story. Yolanda Gonzales, our Latino Families program manager, was in the grocery store with her four-year-old son. As can happen, he wanted something she felt was not good for him, and he was getting cranky. She gently acknowledged his disappointment and recognized how much he desired it but said, "No." She stayed calm, and eventually he settled down, and they went on with their shopping.

A woman not far away watched the whole transaction. She approached Yolanda, rather astonished at how she was staying calm and that she would be losing it now. Yolanda explained the FocusedKids concept of co-regulation. As she remained calm and empathized with her son, he was able to calm himself. She has trained her brain to stay quiet so that she can act rather than react. Children must learn such strategies for self-soothing and problem-solving from adults.

In the current world, ongoing fear, trauma, chaos, and technology keep the amygdala on alert and continue to disrupt the brain's ability to regulate emotions, making it very difficult to problem-solve or maintain a healthy approach to managing it all. This chaos has caused the amygdala to become stuck on alert, and our systems can no longer move us back to a regulated state. There are as many strategies for resetting the nervous system as there are people. One common denominator in successful strategies is finding a place or person who feels safe, and spending there so your brain learns that rest is coming. Something as simple as taking a deep breath multiple times during the day is like taking a big stretch to the amygdala.

We hope 2024 is when we can all find a little peace and calm amidst the chaos. Learn more at our website: focusedkids.com.

FOCUSEDKIDS MISSION

The FocusedKids mission is to partner with schools, families, and community organizations to prioritize healthy brains for our children. We instill brain-building techniques and mindful self-regulation skills into daily routines to increase resilience, self-awareness, and academic success.

OUR VALUES & GOALS

We equip children and adults in their lives with the neurological wiring that promotes mental and physical well-being and builds skills that last a lifetime. FocusedKids' goal is to support a strong foundation from which children can develop social-emotional health by wiring their brains early in life. When they learn how their brains work, they can use that knowledge to their advantage in everyday situations, strengthening wiring through repeated practice.



EQUITY MATTERS

FocusedKids believes that all children have the right to equitable learning opportunities to achieve their full potential as engaged learners and valued members of society despite barriers caused by socioeconomic status, cognitive development, or cultural beliefs.

We build equity in schools and other programs with a three-in-one social-emotional learning, mindfulness, and brain-awareness model. It helps all children and the adults in their lives wire their brains for self-advocacy, thereby enabling them to be proactive in creating the lives they want.

POPULATIONS SERVED

We serve children ages 0-11, as well as their parents and teachers. Approximately 30% of our students are children with special needs, 40% receive free lunch, and 75% of families live below the poverty level. As well as serving families living below the poverty level, we also serve those with income in the top .01%.

FocusedKids includes all groups in public and private schools, including race, sex, special needs, and dual-language.



2023 HIGHLIGHTS



SCHOOLS
PRESCHOOL-5TH GRADE

12

TEACHERS

858

STUDENTS

2,376

FAMILIES

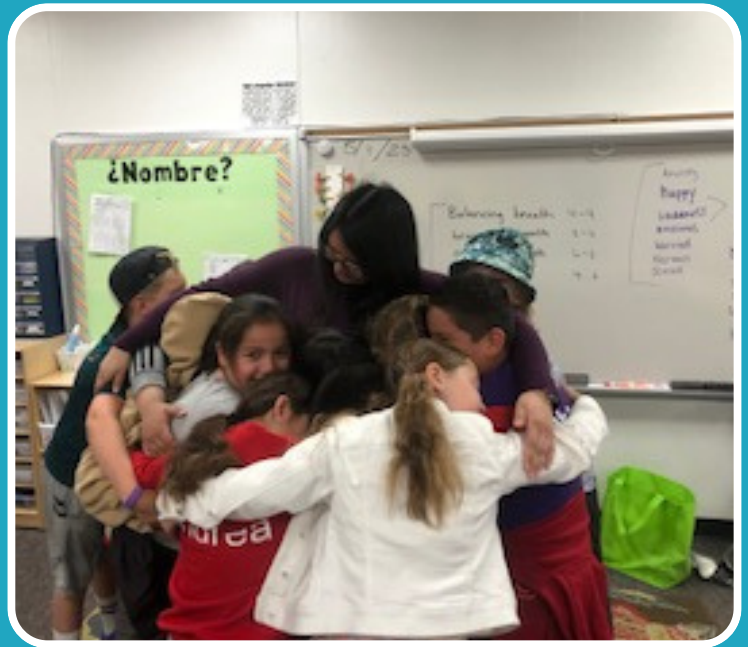
INCLUDING ARIZONA

1033

FOCUSEDKIDS IN THE CLASSROOM

IN 2023,
FOCUSEDKIDS
SERVED:

243 Classrooms



With the guidance of FocusedKids, teachers and students are able to connect more deeply as they experience what happens in the brain when practicing grounding and mindful exercises.

"Being able to feel safe with other people is probably the most important aspect of mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives."

—(Bessel van der Kolk).

IN JULY, FOCUSEDKIDS PAIRED SCIENCE AND THEATER TO OFFER A UNIQUE CAMP FOR 10 TO 13-YEAR-OLDS. THE OUTCOME: MY BRAIN, ON STAGE!

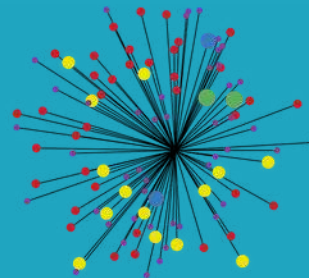


Watch the play here!

"My son really bloomed with the Your Brain on Stage Summer camp program. Everything from the material used, the overall experience, and the performance for younger students was so fulfilling for him and great to see unfold as a parent. I watched as he came home daily with more knowledge of his own brain and a brighter outlook on the experience as a whole. This was the best program offered this summer for kids my son's age in my personal opinion."

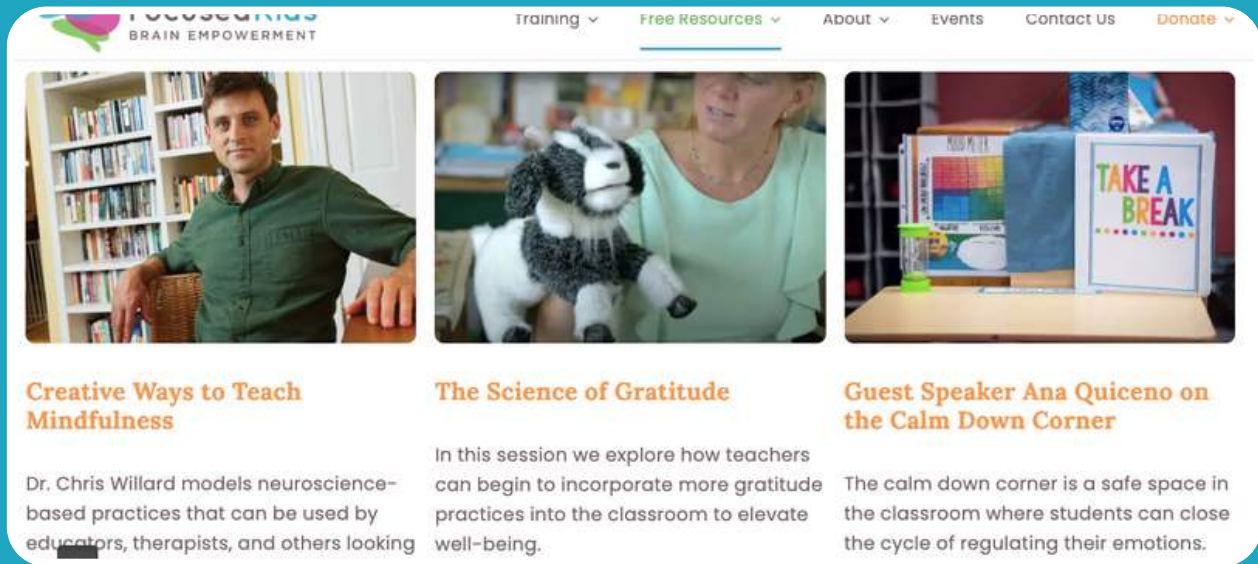
— Camp Parent

TACAW



ASPEN
SCIENCE
CENTER

FOCUSEDKIDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES



Teachers from a variety of teaching backgrounds come together once a month via zoom. The goal is to learn tools rooted in the FocusedKids model to help with classroom regulation, teacher stress, and practical tools to build a more focused classroom. As we grow this highly successful model of support for teachers, we are including more guest speakers who add a high level of expertise in neuroscience, mindfulness, and education.

Number of teachers who participated in our monthly online Professional Development from October-May:

60+

FOCUSED FAMILIES

FocusedKids continues reaching parents throughout the Roaring Fork Valley, offering in-person and virtual parent coaching, as well as family engagement events, parent/child programming, and partnerships with organizations such as Raising a Reader and Early Childhood Network. We are proud to offer our parents support in both Spanish and English.



At FocusedKids, we know parents are essential to completing our model. When parents understand that they are their children's models for self-regulation and co-regulation, their behaviors are more intentional, showing empathy and love. FocusedKids provides a brain-based language that everyone can learn, understand, and incorporate into their lives.

“FocusedKids helps us to be better parents, learn to breathe, take care of ourselves by leaving the room, or use different strategies to calm ourselves first. I enjoyed listening to other parents' strategies and to know that I am not the only one struggling with my kids. I am grateful for these programs, which helped me to do better as a mom. I wished I knew these concepts before, I am sure I could have done better with my older kids.”

— Mother of 4.

Number of Families Served in 2023:

Over
400

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ARIZONA



In 2023, we were fortunate to continue our partnership with Arizona schools and programs, including the Peoria School District.

Jenny Stahl provided engaging hands-on activities for children 0-5 and their caregivers rooted in the FocusedKids model.

Additionally, Jenny facilitated a 6-week course with Step Up to Learning, into which she blended tools from the FocusedKids model.

Our Arizona partnership taught us that FocusedKids can be incorporated into existing programs.

Jenny embedded movement and stories into her lessons, and included tangible takeaways like family journals.

"Your expertise in teaching has put our minds at ease knowing that the behaviors we see are appropriate for their ages."

—Arizona parent

COMMUNITY EFFORTS

FocusedKids prides itself on the relationships we build with our community. In 2023, FocusedKids engaged with **791** members of the community through the following events:



| Event | Number of Participants |
|--|------------------------|
| Headquarters Mental Fitness Fair | 50 |
| Raising a Reader’s Art and Literacy Festival | 110 |
| Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference | 33 |
| Aspen Science Center Community Cafe Series | 18 |
| Flrst Friday Block Party | 150 |
| Pitkin County Library Summer Kick-Off | 200 |
| Waldkinder Adventure Program | 75 |
| Basalt Farmers Market | 50 |
| SANA Run/Walk Event in New Castle | 60 |
| Hispanic Heritage Night | 45 |

FALL FLING!

In November, FocusedKids hosted our first-ever event. The event drew teachers, therapists, community members, and both new and past donors to celebrate our mission, learn more about our program, and enhance our presence in the community.



EVALUATION



Through observation and surveys from teachers and parents, we know that FocusedKids is working as a tool to teach kids how to self-regulate, positively impacting the targets we have identified in our Theory of Change.

Together with the Frontiers of Innovation project, we have developed an evaluation plan. This allows us to complete short iteration studies on components of our program to discover for whom each component works or does not work, and in which situations. Using this model, we can continue to develop and modify our programming to benefit the most children.

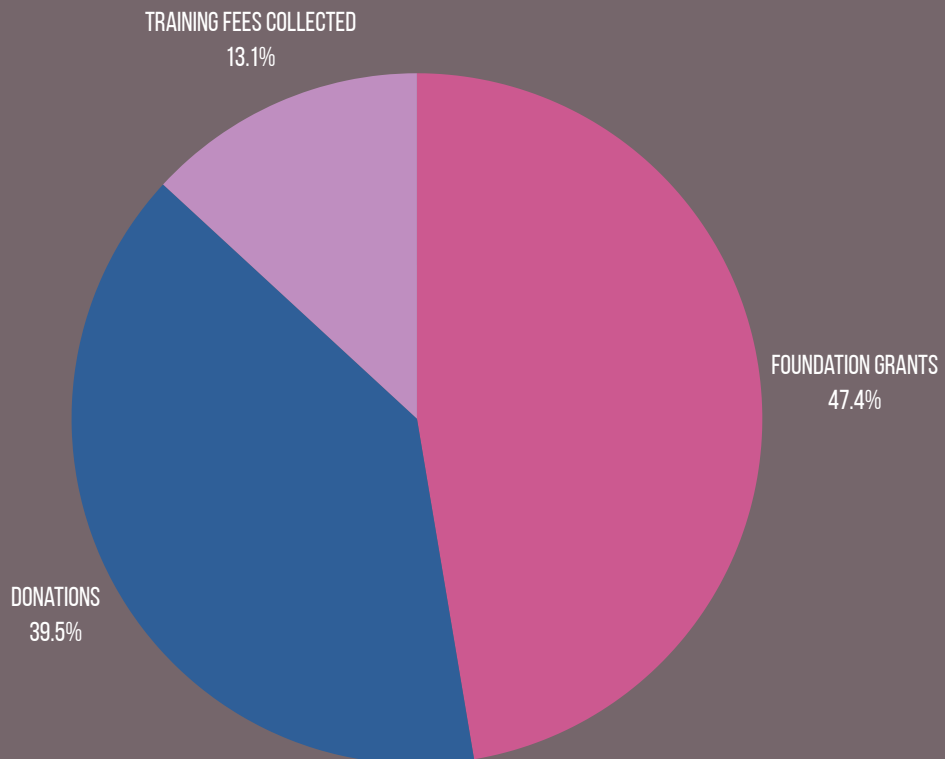
81%

Percentage of teachers who report a significant reduction in classroom stress AFTER implementing FocusedKids.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN



| Income Source | Amount |
|---------------|--------------|
| Grants | \$121,847 |
| Donations | \$101,646.34 |
| Training Fees | \$33814.06 |



2023 GOALS



GOAL: WEBSITE REDESIGN

- Make focusedkids.org more user-friendly
- Promote paid programming sign-ups
- Encourage donations
- Make the site bilingual and mobile-friendly (*still in progress*)
- Create educational resource centers (*still in progress*)



GOAL: FEE-BASED PRICING MODEL

- Create and implement a pricing package for schools.
In 2023, \$33,814.06 of our total income was from school programming.

For 9 years, FocusedKids offered free programming to schools, which was unsustainable. A new pricing package went into full effect during the 2022-23 school year.



GOAL: HIRE ADDITIONAL TRAINERS

- Add one additional FocusedKids in-person/virtual trainer for each: Pre-K, elementary, and middle school.

In June of 2023, FocusedKids hired Susan Elliott as a classroom trainer. She has been a wonderful addition to our team.



GOAL: FUNDRAISING EVENT

- Host our first fundraising event with the help of our board.
We met this goal with Fall Fling in November (see page 15).

GOALS FOR 2024



Here's what we have planned:

LAUNCH ONLINE BRAIN-BASED SEL RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

- New online, cohort-based educator course on the FocusedKids method
- Create free educational resources for educators and parents
- Promote paid programming sign-ups
- Finish the translation of our website

TWO-GENERATION RESEARCH PROJECT WITH THE FOCUSEDKIDS METHOD

Thanks to the generosity of the Giving Network through the Aspen Community Foundation, FocusedKids will use funds to deepen our understanding of how our method meets the needs of the parent populations we serve. The research model we will implement is referred to as a participatory evaluation.

DONOR DEVELOPMENT

As we continue to grow our reach with donors, FocusedKids will collaborate with Raising a Reader to hire a development coordinator to support both organizations' development needs. Raising a Reader and FocusedKids were one of three Pitkin County grant recipients of this collaborative grant.

OUR TEAM

Amanda Petersen, M.A. Executive Director

Yolanda Gonzales, M.A. Program Director, Latino Family Coach

Shannon Campbell, M.A. Preschool Specialist

Susan Elliott, M.A. Classroom Trainer

Shayla Groves, Design, Marketing, & Brand Strategist

Amy Neustadt, Grants Manager

Erik Wardell, Project Management, Marketing/Content Strategy, SEO

BOARD MEMBERS

Susan Graves, Board Chair

Stacey Wanko, Vice President

Jennifer Scherer, Secretary

Bryan Snow, Treasurer

Kathy Hegberg

Eric Theile

Ana Quiceno

FUNDERS

Alpenglow Foundation
Alpine Bank
Aspen Community Foundation
Aspen Thrift Shop
Arches Foundation
Buell Foundation
Colorado Health Foundation
Edward F. Calesa Foundation
Garfield County
Garfield & Hecht, PC
ACF's Giving Network
Halle Family Foundation
Hemera Foundation
Hyde Family Foundation
Living Peace Foundation
Lucky Chances
Pitkin County
Rifle Community Foundation
Rocky Mountain Health Foundation
Snowmass Rotary
Thendora Family Fund
Town of Basalt
Town of Snowmass Village
Two Rivers Community Foundation
Western Colorado Community Foundation
Yampa Valley Community Foundation

SCHOOL PARTNERS

Aspen Community School
Basalt Elementary School
Basalt Middle School
Blue Lake Preschool
Cactus Valley Preschool School
Carbondale Community School
Carbondale Middle School
Child's Play Preschool
Crystal River Elementary School
Colorado Rocky Mountain Preschool
El Busesito Preschool
Elk Creek Elementary School
Glenwood Springs Elementary School
Graham Mesa Elementary School
Highlands Elementary School
Kathryn Senor Elementary School
Little Red Schoolhouse
Riverview School
Sopris Elementary School
Two Rivers Community School
WaldKinder Adventure Preschool
Wamsley Elementary School
Woody Creek Kids
Yampah Mountain High School

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Aspen Family Connections
Aspen Hope Center
Basalt Regional Library
Aspen Science Center
CASA of the ninth
Early Childhood Network
Headquarters
Pathfinders
Pitkin County Library
Raising a Reader from Aspen to Parachute
Roaring Fork Family Resource Center
SANA
Summit 54/Summer Advantage
TACAW
Valley Settlement