NEW WORLD, SAME WONDER

ANNUAL REPORT FY20
Message from the CEO

Dear Friends,

The completion of FY20 marked my first full fiscal year at Ellis, and what a year it was! The year began with preparations to replace our entire HVAC system at 58 Berkeley Street, which was completed in September 2019. The HVAC challenge felt like our greatest hurdle and accomplishment at the time, but at that point we had no idea what March would bring.

Ellis closed on March 17th of 2020 through the end of our fiscal year (June 30), per the State mandate due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our team quickly pivoted to continue our work serving families remotely. Ellis was able to provide educational and social enrichment programming to our children despite the extraordinary circumstances brought upon by the pandemic. In addition to regular Circle Time via Zoom, virtual music classes, Facetime “chats” between our infants and their teachers, Ellis hosted our first (and hopefully only!) remote K-1/UPK graduation. We delivered backpacks, family picnics, and diplomas to each of our graduates to complement a special graduation ceremony via Zoom.

Throughout the closure, our teachers stretched their skills in ways they hadn’t imagined, learning new technology like Zoom to keep their young students engaged and connected to their Ellis community. Ellis retained our entire staff throughout the closure, thanks to the Payroll Protection Program (PPP). That continuity was a top priority to demonstrate our commitment to our team and their value to our community.

While the onslaught of the pandemic was indescribably challenging, its arrival highlighted the strength of the Ellis community and how special it is. Spearheaded by caring parents and friends, our community immediately rallied to support the needs of its members. It is this unwavering support that continues to ensure Ellis will survive this crisis and continue the important work our founder started in 1885.

Though this wasn’t the first full fiscal year as CEO I anticipated, its challenges have shown me how fortunate I am to be in this leadership position at Ellis. Our families, team, boards, partners, and supporters continue to make me grateful to serve.

Yours,

Lauren Cook
Chief Executive Officer

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Ellis Board Profile:

Frank Davis

Meet Frank Davis, one of Ellis’s longest-serving members of our Board of Directors. In April, 2020, as the pandemic brought everything to a halt, Frank stepped up in an important way. With his professional specialty in small business banking, Frank was able to help Ellis secure a COVID-19 Payroll Protection Program loan. This loan allowed Ellis to keep our dedicated educators on staff throughout the spring and be in the best possible position for our Grand Re-Opening on July 1st.

When asked why he first got involved with Ellis and why he has stayed, Frank says “Early in my career, I was looking to get involved in the community and serve on a board whose mission I could really get behind. That was over 30 years ago and I still love the place. I think Ellis is wonderful. We are serving the greatest needs right now. Ellis provides an opportunity that is especially important now. It is so hard on working parents these days and Ellis provides something really special. The program is excellent, really Cadillac quality.”

In addition to his work with Ellis, Frank is very involved in his community. Frank and his wife, Beth, live in Milton, where they raised their two grown children. Frank is a Trustee of the Milton Affordable Housing Trust and a member of Milton’s Equity and Justice for All Advisory Committee.

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Ellis partners with families to provide high quality early childhood education and out-of-school programs in a warm, nurturing environment. A recognized leader in our field, we support children across the socio-economic spectrum, treasure diversity in all forms, and celebrate the joy of childhood.

What Sets ELLIS APART

- Ellis is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, putting it in the top 5% of early childhood programs nationally.
- Ellis is rated a level 3 out of 4 based on Massachusetts’ Quality Rating and Improvement System, and is on track to achieve level 4.
- Due to our high level of quality, Ellis has received Universal Pre-K (UPK) funding from the City of Boston to support two K-1 classrooms in coordination with Boston Public Schools.
Creating Partnerships

Neighborhood Villages

Before the pandemic hit in 2020, Ellis received a great honor: an invitation to partner with Neighborhood Villages, a nonprofit committed to improving early childhood education and care for all families. Lauren Kennedy and Sarah Muncey founded Neighborhood Villages in 2017 as young mothers who realized that early education and childcare are public goods without the same government recognition and support given to older children. Neighborhood Villages provides significant funds for early childhood programs, and uses the results of these pilot efforts to advocate for childcare policy changes.

Ellis is one of five Neighborhood Villages partners. “We chose Ellis for its phenomenal programs, incredible leadership, and trusted relationships with neighborhood families over many years,” says Kennedy. Adds Muncey, “We don’t choose a partner because there’s a deficit, but because we want to foster improvements that become possible when more support is offered.”

Neighborhood Villages is funding two new full-time positions at Ellis. Monica Wright, the Operations Manager, is responsible for the work that makes Ellis run smoothly: scheduling, cost-effective purchasing, and both defining and implementing policies and procedures for effective operations, particularly during COVID. These tasks require time, focus, and expertise, but had fallen to senior staff and teachers on an ad hoc basis.

Jessie Elston, the Family Navigator, is responsible for helping families connect with needed community resources that can be difficult to find, such as food, housing, parent engagement classes, and social work support. “It’s hard for teachers who recognize what a child’s family needs but aren’t in a position to help,” says Muncey. “Support for families is the best investment we can make.”

Both organizations hope to continue their collaboration over time. They will work together to assess and measure its effects on teachers, staff, children, and families, and will then seek ways to standardize the changes that best foster success. Ellis welcomed the new staff at the end of Fiscal Year 2020. We look forward to all we’ll have to report a year from now.

“We don’t choose a partner because there’s a deficit, but because we want to foster improvements that become possible when more support is offered.”

SARAH MUNCEY
Co-Founder Neighborhood Villages
Lindsey and Brian Swett discovered Ellis when looking for early education programs in the South End for their son, Arnie, and were immediately attracted to the Ellis mission to support working parents. Lindsey, who owns her own business in the neighborhood, says, “The fact that Ellis explicitly calls out that childcare exists to help people, especially women, continue to work is really important to me. Ellis has a legacy of doing just that for generations.”

Arnie started in Ms. Rosa’s infant classroom in September of 2016. Lindsey recalls that Ms. Rosa helped her and Brian recognize Arnie’s developmental needs and milestones, support which was particularly helpful to them as new parents. Lindsey and Brian were thrilled when their younger son Penn began in Ms. Rosa’s classroom after Ellis’s grand reopening in the summer of 2020.

When Ellis closed due to the pandemic in March of 2020, Lindsey and Brian instantly stepped up to help other Ellis families. In Lindsey’s words “it was just a no brainer” to make a generous donation to cover the cost of subsidized co-pays. “In my mind, this pandemic has really laid bare inequities and struggles that already existed, particularly for women of color, and that’s not a society that I’m willing to accept.”

Lindsey hopes to remain involved in the Ellis community because she feels that by helping Ellis execute its goals and its mission she is supporting more neighborhoods in Boston, due to Ellis’s broad service reach. Lindsey and Brian remain extremely grateful for the community they’ve found at Ellis. Arnie returned to Ellis after the grand reopening in July before starting Kindergarten at a new school, and enjoys saying hello to his friends and former teachers when he and his parents pick up Penn at the end of the day.

The Swett family’s kindness is just one of many examples of Ellis families supporting one another. Whether through a simple, “How are you?” during pick-up, words of affirmation during a Family Town Hall meeting, or immediate direct support in times of crisis, the Ellis community continues to show up in full force with care and compassion.

Dannielle and her husband Keith, who attended Ellis as a school-age child, spent three years on Ellis’s waitlist before their oldest son, Quentin, started in Preschool. After spending his infancy and toddler years at a family childcare center and a Head Start program, Quentin’s learning and development thrived with Ellis’s more structured curriculum and social opportunities. Dannielle and Keith were thrilled when their younger son Kameron began in an infant classroom.

Dannielle says she and Keith have loved seeing their boys share what they learned in school at home, making it clear how much they picked up in the classroom and through playing with other children. She says Quentin started Kindergarten with confidence and has excelled academically, especially in math and sciences, and Kameron has already expressed his readiness to begin Kindergarten in the fall.

Dannielle joined the Ellis Family Committee within the first few weeks of enrolling Quentin. She recalls that her own mother was very involved in her school growing up, and she felt it was important to model that same example for her boys. The Committee gave her opportunities to connect with other families, including some who she’s kept in touch with even after their children graduated, and also add more diverse representation to the Committee.

Dannielle, originally from Dorchester, never had a teacher who looked like her until she attended Spelman College, a Historically Black College, in Atlanta, Georgia. “I’m used to being an ‘only,’ creating space for myself at the table where I don’t see people like myself.” That’s why, she says, it’s so valuable that her children have teachers and friends at Ellis who look like them and who may have similar life experiences. “My hope is that as my boys grow and develop and create their own life paths, they never have to experience being an ‘only’.”

Dannielle joined the Ellis Board of Trustees in the Fall of 2019, and hopes to remain engaged even after Kameron goes to Kindergarten in the Fall. A non-profit professional, she aims to bring her skills and relationships as the Manager of Development at the Greater Boston Food Bank to the development team at Ellis.

“Ellis is part of our family. Our experience over the last 6 years has been nothing but positive. I’ve developed such great relationships with teachers, staff and other families, and I feel incredibly fortunate and blessed to have been introduced to Ellis: it’s been such an amazing resource for my family and has really set my children up for success.”
The Year in Numbers

**BALANCE SHEET**
**JUNE 30, 2020**

**ASSETS**
- Cash and cash equivalents $1,131,452
- Restricted cash – Endowment $180,856
- Accounts and pledges receivable $398,944
- Prepaid expenses $9,654
- Property and equipment - net $10,688,141

**TOTAL ASSETS** $12,409,047

**LIABILITIES**
- Notes payable, current portion $52,769
- Accounts payable $89,075
- Accrued expenses $171,470
- Deposits $18,669
- Long Term Debt $4,137,536

**TOTAL LIABILITIES** $4,469,519

**NET ASSETS**
- Without donor restrictions $7,703,673
- With donor restrictions $235,856

**TOTAL NET ASSETS** $7,939,529

**TOTAL LIABILITIES, NET ASSETS** $12,409,048

**FY20 REVENUE: $5,482,371**

Government Grants & Contracts 41%
Other (PPP Loan) 10%
Philanthropy 25%
Earned Revenue-Tuition 24%

**FY20 EXPENSES: $4,534,534**

Early Education Program 70%
School Age Program 10%
Administration 14%
Development 6%

**Unexpected HVAC Replacement**

For years, Ellis struggled with a faulty HVAC system at 58 Berkeley Street that at times left us without heat in the building. After consulting with multiple HVAC experts, we decided we must replace the system. That decision required swiftly raising just under $500,000 to complete the replacement during the early Fall of 2019 when neither heat nor air conditioning are typically necessary. Thanks to the support of many of you, and a large investment from the Commonwealth, we secured the funds necessary to complete the project on schedule.

The logistics of this project were as daunting as the urgent fundraising required. Our top priority was to provide uninterrupted care for our families, despite the infrastructure overhaul that impacted nearly every room at 58 Berkeley Street. We’re happy to share that not a single classroom was closed throughout the two-month project. To protect our children from the construction, we created temporary classrooms in common areas next door at 66 Berkeley Street, with oversight and approval of the Department of Early Childhood Education and Care.

We moved 117 children in 10 classrooms across the street in different shifts while the work took place, requiring 5 different moves and several temporary classroom reconfigurations, often requiring staff to work overtime. (We had a good laugh wondering what our neighbors thought as they saw us wheeling empty cribs back and forth between our buildings!) The entire Ellis team worked together to minimize the disruption to the children we serve, and our families demonstrated their characteristic understanding and flexibility. To our families and our HVAC donors, we appreciate you and our beautifully functioning heat.
2019 Annual Benefit

Ellis is Wonderland

Our annual benefit took place at the South End’s Beehive restaurant on October 24, 2019, and we were thrilled to welcome over 275 guests to spend an evening with us embracing the joy of childhood. “Ellis is Wonderland” reflected the vibrancy of Ellis with table centerpieces of crayons and Play-Doh, a menu inspired by youthful favorites including grilled cheese and milk and cookies, and a fun-filled performance by some of our school-age children and the Sugar Babies band.

Ellis parent and Board of Trustees member, Dannielle Pinson, spoke about the impact of Ellis, saying, “I truly believe Ellis is creating the diverse leaders of tomorrow. Its rich diversity sets Ellis apart from other early educational centers and gives our children an advantage as they continue their educational journeys.”

Some other key highlights from the event included:

- Lauren Cook’s remarks, stating, “Ellis represents what Boston should be and can be, a place where social barriers are broken down and children and families from all socio-economic, racial, and cultural backgrounds form a community of support and friendship.”
- Mike Scannell, Ellis Board of Directors member, receiving the Ida B. Eldredge award for his service engaging, educating, and empowering working families.
- Over $300,000 raised for continued operating support.

We remain thankful to everyone who helped make Ellis is Wonderland a success.

DONORS

$10,000+
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Coleen and Ted Dinneen
Suzanne Dwyer
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Alison and Frank Quirk
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Boston Public Schools
Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Our Team

AS OF JUNE 30, 2020

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Sugenis Diaz (15+ years)
Antonia Diniz
Juleann Diniz Comes
Colleen Donovan
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Shanika Eduard
Yasmin Eliiano-Anderson
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Gine Gomes
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Jusietha Gonzalez Montoya
Maurice Hallett (15+ years)
Tammy Hillery (25+ years)
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Alevitssandra Jesus (5+ years)
Alettesandra Jesus (5+ years)
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Clifford Kwong
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Carishmar Moore
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Sonya Nesbitt
Michelle O’Hara
Tiaja Powell
Rayshawn Reese
Desiree Reed
Tamairi Rivera
Ayka Sakanovic
Kiya Savannah (5+ years)
Kalicia Sears
Jamalia Sheets
Jennifer Slash
Lisa St. Hill (10+ years)
Shirley Strickland (15+ years)
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Shawntell Usher-Thames
Jamileth Valentin (5+ years)
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