



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

LEADING THE WAY
in early intervention & education



ABOUT Northland Early Education Center

THE HISTORY

The history of the only inclusive early education and therapy center in the Kansas City, MO metro starts in 1981 with a group of concerned parents. Those parents came together after being unable to find suitable childcare that would welcome every child, regardless of their economic background or developmental ability. Those parents took matters into their own hands and established a non-profit organization that would accept all children. From there, they welcomed their first class, which was just six children learning and developing in the basement of a church in Blue Springs, MO.

Since those humble beginnings, Northland Early Education Center has grown and expanded to fill the growing need in the community for inclusive education options for children with special needs. Today it stands as a newly renovated and expanded nationally accredited early education and therapy center that is positioned to help more children than ever.



THE MISSION

Provide early education and therapy services for children who have special needs and typical needs in fully inclusive classrooms, so every child can reach their full potential.



A NEW ERA For Inclusive Education

THE SERVICES

Northland Early Education Center provides a variety of increasingly important inclusive services for children ages birth to 12 years old. in the community.

Services Include:

- Onsite & In-Home Early Intervention Services
 - Physical Therapy
 - Occupational, Therapy
 - Speech & Language Pathology
 - Special Instruction
- Early Education (Birth - 5)
- Before/After & Summer School (K-12)

These services are becoming more needed as the number of children diagnosed with a disability continues to increase across the country.

ADMINISTRATION

- Brea Connett, Executive Director
- Natasha Lehman, Program Director
- Sean Cunniff, Development Director
- Cindy Humbird, Office Manager

3 NEW CLASSROOMS

3 additional classrooms were completed with this expansion and renovation, bringing the total number of classrooms to 12. With these additional classrooms, 172 children can be enrolled onsite at any given time. That's a 51% increase over the previous maximum of 114.

NEW THERAPY GYM

This newly created space is filled with specialized equipment and tools to assist children who receive therapy services. This gym supports classrooms by providing a space for the teachers and therapists to provide one-on-one instruction.

NEW PLAYGROUND

The new larger ADA-approved playground allows more children to play outside at any given time. The new playground is divided into three sections, so children of different age groups can safely play at the same time. All the equipment is inclusive and adaptable for children of all abilities. Additionally, the playground is covered in a rubber pour-in-place surface that exceeds safety standards and guidelines.

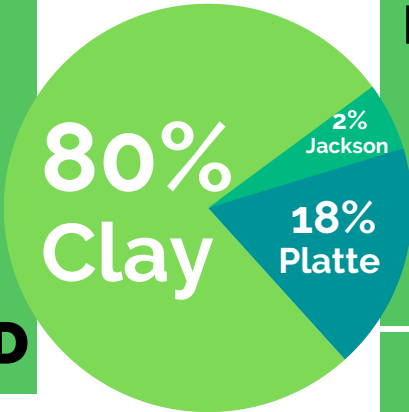
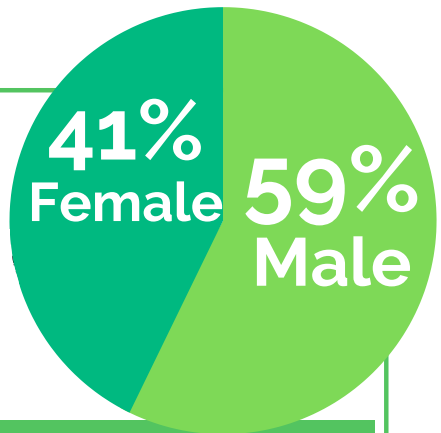
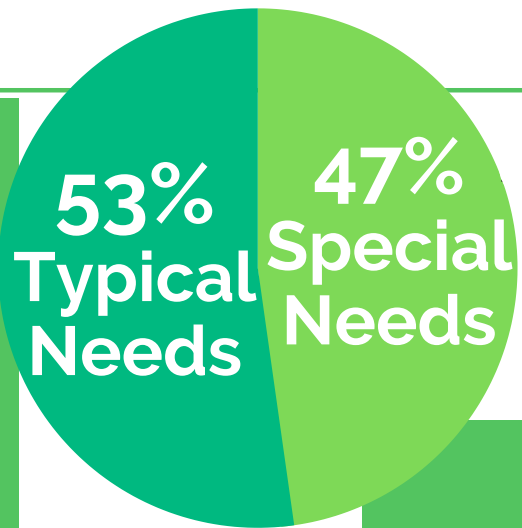


A NEW FACILITY \$4 Million Expansion & Renovation

NEW MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

This room, known as the "Play Cafe", offers children an opportunity to play inside whenever inclement weather forces the closure of the new playground. Additionally, it serves as a cafeteria, so children can be prepared for how meals will work in elementary school. This space can also be used to host educational seminars, staff training, meetings, fundraisers, and other activities that help support the families we serve and the entire community.





COMMUNITY IMPACT

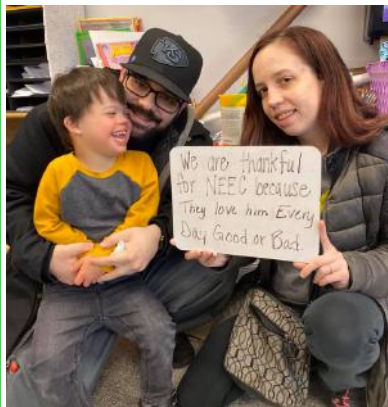
The end of 2019 was a step towards normalcy for the newly expanded and renovated Northland Early Education Center. The renovated and new classrooms were opened in November, allowing for more children to be enrolled. Compared to 2018, 5% more children received services in 2019 and the children served were more ethnically diverse. Additionally, more children from outside Clay County received services compared to 2018. Lastly, the ratio of Special Needs to Typical Children was almost 50/50 on-site, which is the goal to maintain an inclusive environment. The Therapy Department provided 2,169 hours of therapy (Physical, Occupational, Speech & Special Instruction) to children in 2019. That number will rise in 2020 with the addition of a second Occupational Therapist to the staff, bringing the total number of therapists to five. The goal for 2020 is to serve more than 300 children.

2019 Outcome Report



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Isaiah Suarez



Isaiah Suarez's life at Northland Early Education Center started during a dark time in his mother's life. Shaelen Pansza said she was a single mother coming out of an abusive relationship trying to raise a child with Down Syndrome on her own. Shaelen

needed help, and it came when a friend told her about a place called Northland Early Education Center. That moment marked a new chapter in their lives.

Isaiah enrolled in March 2016 when he was 14 months old. He enrolled at the same time his mother took a job here as an Assistant Teacher. When Isaiah first started, his mother said he was unable to walk or speak. She also said he didn't understand how to play with toys. With his mother just a few classrooms away, both their lives began to change.

Through the Early Intervention Services program, Isaiah worked

with a Physical Therapist, Speech Pathologist and Special Instructor. Fast forward to today, Isaiah can run and play with his friends who love him for who he is. He understands words, communicates with sign, solve problems and so much more. Shaelen credits it all to his teachers and therapists.

While Shaelen moved on to work away from Northland Early Education Center, she still drops off Isaiah every morning and picks him up every evening. That won't likely change as he begins kindergarten in the fall of 2020, because he's expected to enroll in the Learn 4 Life program.

Isaiah Suarez has been a staple here for almost his entire life, and it will stay that way for years to come.

A lot of people recognize Sara Steel as the Lead Teacher in the Yellow Room, but her life with Northland Early Education Center began long before she joined the staff.

Back in 1999, a three-year-old girl with Autism Spectrum Disorder (previously known as Pervasive Development Disorder) enrolled at Lighthouse Preschool. Her parents chose this school because their daughter needed an Occupational Therapist and a Speech & Language Pathologist, which Lighthouse had. Over the next three years, with the guidance of her therapists, teachers, and the benefits of being in an inclusive classroom, that girl overcame her challenges. She eventually graduated, but the lessons she learned sparked a lifelong passion she carries to this day.



In 2017, that no-longer little girl joined the staff at what Lighthouse Preschool became, Northland Early Education Center. Two years later, with a degree from the University of Kansas, she became Yellow Room Lead Teacher, Sara Steel.

Sara never gave up and continues to be the kind positive force this community needs. She is a fantastic example of the lifelong impact Northland Early Education Center can make. [Page 05](#)

"Everything he does, he learned at Northland Early Education Center."

SHAELAN PANSZA, ISAIAH'S MOTHER



ALUMNUS SPOTLIGHT

Sara Steel



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2020

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