



ANNUAL REPORT

2016



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DEAR FRIENDS

2016 WAS A YEAR OF MEANINGFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES. WE FOCUSED ON STRENGTHENING OUR PROGRAMS TO ENSURE THAT OUR WORK BEST SUPPORTED THOSE WE SERVE, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO MAKING AN EVEN GREATER IMPACT ON THE LIVES OF THE 1 IN 5 PEOPLE WITH LEARNING AND ATTENTION ISSUES IN THE FUTURE.

In 2016 the NCLD team led a number of collaborative and ambitious efforts that advanced our mission and set critical initiatives in motion.

We made significant progress this year in many of our programs and, knowing that there is so much more to do, we took important steps to strengthen and broaden NCLD's positive impact on the lives of the 1 in 5 and their families:

DRIVING GROWTH OF UNDERSTOOD.ORG:

Our innovative digital platform for parents reached a record-breaking 1.4 million users per month in 2016, and continues to climb. The positive response from the community of parents is remarkable, and echoes the need for a resource like Understood. We recognize the immense potential for growth on this platform, and aim to continually increase our reach and impact.

EXPANDING OUR REACH TO SUPPORT EDUCATORS:

We've collaborated with our partners and our team of experts to begin to build a digital platform that will provide both special >

and general educators with customized resources so they can adequately support students with learning and attention issues.

PRIORITIZING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG ADULTS:

We are aware that there are many obstacles that young adults with learning and attention issues face during their transition to adulthood. NCLD is well positioned to take on these challenges, and we are building a Young Adult Leadership Council to make sure authentic experiences and direct voices are an integral part of this work.

AMPLIFYING KEY POLICY ISSUES:

NCLD's Public Policy and Advocacy team continues to play a leadership role at the federal level to advocate for the 1 in 5 people with learning and attention issues. In 2016, we began to strengthen NCLD's impact at the state and local level, and plan to continue this work well into 2017 and beyond.

Importantly, 2016 marked the beginning of a new era of leadership at NCLD when the board appointed Mimi Corcoran as President and CEO.

An innovator and change leader in education, Mimi has led programs that have transformed the lives of children and families. As she began her tenure at NCLD, Mimi shared her readiness for the challenges ahead. "I am emboldened by the willingness of our supporters to reach out to others and to make a difference. Their commitment will enable NCLD to continue to lead the way in making the world fully accessible and inclusive of the 1 in 5 – a world they can thrive in."

As much as we're fueled by our accomplishments, we know we must redouble our efforts. As advocates, educators, and policymakers, our actions must match our words, and we must keep our promise to protect the rights of all people to succeed.

We are grateful for our Board's engagement and the support of so many others who give new meaning to partnership and collaboration. Thank you for joining us on this critical mission.

Mimi Corcoran


MIMI CORCORAN
President and CEO



Frederic M. Poses

FREDERIC M. POSES
Chairman





“NCLD continues to place the empowerment of parents as its first priority.” *—James Wendorf*

WITH APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE TO GREAT LEADERSHIP

IN 2016, JAMES WENDORF CONCLUDED 17 YEARS OF REMARKABLE LEADERSHIP AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NCLD.

Working together with invaluable partners, Jim led NCLD through a dynamic period of expansion and innovation, advancing initiatives that changed the trajectory of people living with learning and attention issues.



As he prepared to pass the leadership torch, Jim talked about what his work at NCLD meant to him. “Throughout my tenure we’ve held fast to our founding values and vision. As an education and advocacy organization founded by parents, NCLD continues to place the empowerment of parents as its first priority.”

The many accomplishments that signified Jim’s leadership include:

- Developing the first-ever scientifically-valid early literacy screening tool, “Get Ready to Read!,” which engaged partners in the for-profit and nonprofit space to screen hundreds of thousands of preschoolers for development of early literacy skills.
- Establishing NCLD as the go-to public policy organization on all issues related to learning and attention issues. His work advocating on the policy front was described as always “nimble and smart.”
- Initiating policy roundtables, convenings of thought leaders, original research, reports, publications and online events to support the field with knowledge, fresh perspective and effective solutions.
- Supporting the creation of Understood.org, the first comprehensive digital resource with the goal of empowering parents whose children are struggling with learning and attention issues.

THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD: CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES OF SUPPORT

PARENTS HAVE BEEN AT THE CENTER OF NCLD SINCE

ITS FOUNDING. Thanks to the power of Understood.org this year, we witnessed the continued transformative growth of a community of parents learning and supporting each other in the quest to help their children lead fulfilling lives.

Understood began with a vision – to give all parents access to expertise and resources generally only available to few. The numbers show that we have exceeded all expectations.



By June 2016, 1.4 million users were visiting Understood.org every month.



Email activity grew ten-fold showing deeper engagement by parents and educators.



Total Facebook likes increased by 40%.



An extraordinary Ad Council campaign—nearly \$70 million in donated media—increased awareness of Understood to an unprecedented level.

CONTENT THAT DRIVES COMMUNITY

Understood features thousands of articles and many one-of-a-kind tools—deep dives into issues of concern to parents and valuable decision guides—all created and vetted by our panel of parent and professional experts.

In 2016, content became available almost daily:

- Among the most popular new pieces introduced were [The Difference Between IEPs and 504 Plans](#) and [The Difference Between Tantrums and Sensory Meltdowns](#).
- One of our most successful pieces, [ADHD and Lying: What You Need to Know](#) was read by over 400,000 parents and educators in just the first month.
- ADHD was also the topic of a popular infographic [7 Ways Kids with Learning and Attention Issues Can Get Tripped Up by a Math Problem](#).
- A special feature of the site presents celebrity spotlights like one with [actress Lisa Ling](#), who shared her experiences living with ADHD.





MOBILIZING PARENTS FOR ACTION

Understood positions NCLD to achieve both large-scale impact and community-specific initiatives. This year, our public policy team worked with Understood to mobilize parents around the new federal education law, the Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), arming them with a comprehensive advocacy toolkit. In Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and South Carolina, parent advocates hosted local gatherings, forums, and meetings with local leaders to ensure that states were held accountable for providing a quality education to all students.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 BEING UNDERSTOOD

In the coming year, we'll continue to scale the reach and impact of Understood to inspire parents to take action:

- Deepening our offerings in key areas including postsecondary transition, ADHD, and social and emotional issues.
- Fostering an even greater sense of connectedness with visitors to the site to create deeper online engagement and leverage our mobilization efforts.
- Continuing to work to reach all families with a special focus on under-resourced communities.
- Scaling mobilization efforts to connect parents on the ground and create communities of support, advocate at the district level, and shape state-level policy.
- Enhancing parents' roles by continuing to develop Understood Parent Fellows and Advocates, and delivering high quality trainings.

And more to come...

"Thank you for your articles and resources! Because of something you shared a few weeks ago, I've been connected with a much needed resource during a very hard and scary time. You've helped me to find some help and support. Thank you." – Understood Facebook Follower

Since 1996,
20 educators
have received
the Bill Ellis
Award.

EDUCATION AWARDS



This year's coveted Bill Ellis Award was given to [Dr. Nikolai Vitti](#), Superintendent of Duval County Public School in Jacksonville, Florida, for his dedication to helping students address learning challenges.



[PS 19Q Marino Jeantet Elementary School](#) in Corona, New York, received the Pete and Carrie Rozelle Founders Award for their extraordinary support of students with learning and attention issues.



The Rozelle Award private school recipient was the [Currey Ingram Academy](#) in Brentwood, Tennessee, which uses individualized learning plans to meet the needs of all students.

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION: SUPPORTING SCHOOLS THAT SERVE ALL STUDENTS

NCLD CHAMPIONS THE USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED FRAMEWORKS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT THE ADVANCEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS.

We know that customizing education to meet the needs of students with learning and attention issues is crucial, and so we continue to work at the national level to ensure that our students are included in conversations around the implementation of personalized learning.

Through the *Schools that Work* program, funded by the Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation, NCLD is bringing the Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) approach to Massachusetts school districts through the Cape Cod Collaborative. In 2016, NCLD concluded its first year of engagement with Barnstable Public Schools and is completing its second year with Mashpee Public Schools, offering intensive strategic planning and careful monitoring of outcomes at the district and school levels.

With the success of Understood.org, we've seen continued demand from teachers for support in addressing diverse learning needs. In 2016, we began a strategic planning process with the goal of launching a new digital platform for educators that will channel our expertise to develop custom resources for teachers and partner organizations across the country.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 >

Most students with learning and attention issues spend at least 80 percent of the school day in classrooms with general education teachers, yet these professionals are typically not trained to support them. NCLD is developing new content and tools, through innovative use of technology, to offer on-demand and customized resources for both general and special education teachers. Inspired by what our platform for parents, Understood, has achieved for children with learning and attention issues, we will seek to make expert advice and proven instructional practices accessible to— and popular with— all educators. Ultimately, it is our vision to ensure that the highest-quality supports for these students are seen as best practice teaching standards for all students.

And more to come...

COLLABORATING WITH YOUNG ADULTS: THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD

A KEY FOCUS IN 2016 WAS PRIORITIZING YOUNG ADULTS WITH LEARNING AND ATTENTION ISSUES AS A CRITICAL AUDIENCE and initiating a planning process to leverage our strengths as a resource hub and thought leader to meet their needs.

This year we focused on publishing and disseminating the results of our *Student Voices* research. Supported by the Oak Foundation, we surveyed more than a thousand young adults and parents to better understand the needs of the estimated 4.6 million young adults struggling with learning and attention issues. The research revealed a great deal of information about the powerful drivers that prepare young adults for the

transition to postsecondary pathways.

The question for us was how we could use this information to help unravel some of the obstacles in the post-secondary transition process. We started once again by listening to young adults.

Together with Eye to Eye and Senator Bob Casey (D-PA),

NCLD hosted a roundtable discussion with parents, advocates, and college students to showcase the need for a central resource for college students with learning and attention issues.

To fully integrate the voices of young adults into the work we do, we're establishing a national Young Adult Leadership Council—a representative body of our own constituents to help us begin to set in place a major program initiative aimed at reducing stigma, cultivating self-advocacy skills and developing the next generation of leaders.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 >

As the Young Adult Leadership Council begins to take shape, our young adults will be an integral partner in NCLD advocacy initiatives. We know their voices will be indispensable as we work with Congress to pass the RISE Act, which helps ease the transition to college for students with disabilities, and consider other key moments where young adults need more support. We will engage young adults directly and use their experiences to help shape our national initiatives!





2016 Anne Ford Scholarship winner Elijah Ditchendorf and Allegra Ford Thomas Scholarship winner Jocelyn Hanrath



Roundtable with Senator Bob Casey and Eye to Eye

**“My differences
have taught
me that no
one should
ever define
my potential
in terms of
learning.”**

- Elijah

ADVOCATING FOR FAIRNESS AND EQUITY

MOBILIZING FOR ACTION

IN 2016, NCLD CONTINUED TO LEAD THE CHARGE IN WASHINGTON AND AROUND THE COUNTRY to ensure that the rights of individuals with learning and attention issues are protected and opportunities to grow and thrive assured. Significant progress was made on key fronts.

ADVOCATING FOR THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

NCLD worked with the U.S. Secretary of Education and business, civil rights, and education reform leaders to impact regulations. We mobilized parents to advocate for provisions that would ensure states and schools be held accountable for the learning outcomes of all students, including bringing the issues to presidential primaries in Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and South Carolina. As states determine their ESSA implementation plans, we continue to engage parents in taking action in new states like Colorado and Georgia.

RAISING AWARENESS FOR THOSE WITH DYSLEXIA

This year we helped spearhead the Senate Education Committee hearing on dyslexia. Witnesses included Dr. Guinevere Eden, a field expert, and April Hanrath, mother of NCLD 2016 Allegra Ford Thomas scholarship winner, Jocelyn. We helped assure passage of the READ Act, which requires the National Science Foundation (NSF) to devote \$5 million each year for research on the science of learning disabilities including dyslexia.

GAINING INSIGHTS ON PERSONALIZED LEARNING

In our ongoing initiative on personalized learning, we convened experts and advisors in Washington D.C. and [produced a report](#) outlining 10 policy and practice recommendations for implementing personalized learning as it relates to students with disabilities. We presented our findings at a panel discussion with the Alliance for Excellent Education and National Council of La Raza to an audience of nearly 900 people.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 >

Plans are under way for NCLD to share recommendations from three state convenings on personalized learning, initiated in New Hampshire, Colorado and North Carolina. We will synthesize and disseminate the lessons from each state about how students with disabilities can benefit most from personalized learning systems and where the biggest barriers to their inclusion exist. Our personalized learning efforts are making huge strides in helping educators and leaders see the value of customized learning for all students, and we look forward to continuing this important research!

OUR PARTNERS: THE NCLD PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

OUR ABILITY TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL RESOURCES AND ENGINEER MOBILIZATION IS PREDICATED ON PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPED OVER TIME WITH TOP RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS. Many of these highly accomplished individuals serve on NCLD's Professional Advisory Board (PAB).

PAB members ensure that our programming, policy recommendations, and messaging are informed by the most up-to-date research. These esteemed leaders in the field – educators, psychologists, researchers, physicians, and advocates – share advice and content on learning and attention issues. They connect us to organizations, policymakers, and practitioners and provide feedback to our leadership team. They represent the organization at conferences and other forums that enhance NCLD's stature as a thought leader.

We are fortunate to have Dr. David Chard serve as chair and Dr. George Batsche serve as vice chair of the Professional Advisory Board. President of Wheelock College, Dr. Chard is a highly respected spokesperson for learning and attention issues and a powerful advocate for equity and equal opportunities for students across the spectrum. He is former dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2017 >

Our Professional Advisory Board played a key consultative role in the compilation of the fourth edition of NCLD's "State of Learning Disabilities" report to be released in Spring 2017. Considered the foremost report on learning and attention issues, the 2017 edition will be entirely online and feature interactive data on all 50 states. The data make clear the progress we have made as well as the challenges we face in areas such as reading scores, graduation rates, school suspensions, access to challenging coursework, and successful transitions to college and the workplace.

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THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

2016 FINANCIAL REPORT

ASSETS (\$)	2016	2015
Cash	1,491,818	471,288
Contributions and other receivables	2,782,168	526,629
Prepaid expenses and other assets	63,610	162,374
Investments	0	0
Security deposits	79,144	79,144
Property and equipment, net	506,808	685,874
TOTAL ASSETS	4,923,548	1,925,309

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS (\$)	2016	2015
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	387,485	344,110
Accrued vacation	296,185	248,914
Deferred revenue	0	946
Deferred rent	31,045	62,375
TOTAL LIABILITIES	714,715	656,345

Commitments and contingencies		
Net Assets:		
Unrestricted	704,140	493,592
Temporarily unrestricted	3,504,693	775,372
TOTAL NET ASSETS	4,208,833	1,268,964
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	4,923,548	1,925,309

Revenue (%)	FY
Fee for service/other	1,189,675
Special events	2,321,010
Corporations and foundations	7,495,586
Individual giving	1,072,088

Expense (%)	FY
Parent empowerment	5,657,749
School transformation	533,347
Public policy	720,792
Young adult	303,360
Fundraising and development	856,639
Management and general	1,066,603

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\$100,000 +

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OUR DEDICATED BOARD

Led by Chairman Fred Poses, our devoted board of trustees provides leadership and oversight of organizational programs and operations with committees dedicated to programs, finance, development, and policy. The board informs NCLD's strategic priorities in collaboration with the organization's leadership team and staff members.

In 2016, we welcomed four new trustees to the NCLD board; their insights and experience will help us move forward on our priorities for growth and expansion.

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NCLD works to improve the lives of the 1 in 5 children and adults nationwide with learning and attention issues — by empowering parents and young adults, transforming schools, and advocating for equal rights and opportunities.



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