



2023
Annual
Report

A Letter from the CEO



Dear Friends,

Reflecting on 2023 fills me with immense pride and gratitude for the progress we've made together. This year has been one of collaboration, innovation, and resilience as we continue our work to create a world where individuals with learning disabilities thrive.

Our team at NCLD has been laser-focused on building capacity, refining our strategic vision—our 'NorthStar,' which guides our work— and celebrating meaningful milestones with our community. Early in the year, we gathered in New Orleans for a transformative retreat. This convening aligned our goals and set the stage for impactful work ahead, including collaborating with The GRAD Partnership and other key stakeholders to develop resources addressing critical needs in education and student success systems.

Building on this momentum, we hosted our annual LD Day of Action in June, where nearly 80 young adults took to Capitol Hill to advocate for equitable policies and build community. Their energy and dedication to driving change were truly inspiring.

We also made significant strides in our strategic planning process. With input from our Board of Directors, Professional Advisory Board, and staff, we laid the groundwork for NCLD's future, focusing on bold goals, measurable benchmarks, and a clear vision for the years to come.

This year marked the launch of impactful research initiatives, including a national survey in partnership with WestEd and the release of new federal data snapshots. These projects underscore our commitment to creating and sharing data that drives understanding and action.

Our work would not be possible without your steadfast support. From our donors and partners to our dedicated team and the incredible young leaders on our Young Adult Leadership Council, you are the force that propels us forward. Together, we are creating a society where accessibility, equity, and opportunity are not aspirations but realities.

Thank you for being an essential part of our journey and for your unwavering support during my first year as CEO. I look forward to continuing this important work together and building a brighter future for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Dr. Jacqueline Rodriguez

Chief Executive Officer



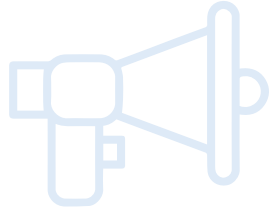
FUELING THE DISABILITY RIGHTS MOVEMENT

We are committed to building communities, creating equitable environments, and amplifying voices from the LD community to push learning accessibility forward. With every step and achievement, we celebrate proudly alongside our partners and peers.

In 2023, NCLD amplified awareness of learning disabilities through innovative communications and marketing efforts that expanded our reach and strengthened our impact. A highlight of the year was the introduction of Congressional resolutions officially recognizing October as National Learning Disabilities Awareness Month. Representatives Julia Brownley and Erin Houchin, alongside Senators John Hickenlooper and Ted Budd, championed this resolution, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness, fostering understanding, and ensuring equal opportunities exist for individuals with learning disabilities. This recognition represents a significant step toward national acknowledgment and support for the learning disabilities community.

Along with this achievement, our campaign, Learning Disabilities Awareness Month initiative, *Lead with LD*, educated audiences on specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. Through digital platforms, the campaign connected with broader disability communities, delivering resources and sparking conversations that advanced our mission.

Voices of Leadership



The *Lead with LD* campaign featured compelling stories from alumni of our Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC), who shared their personal and professional journeys:

Erin Crosby, a special education teacher and YALC alum, authored a blog for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. In it, Erin highlighted her philosophy of empowering students with learning disabilities to see themselves as individuals with bright futures.

Kayla Helm-Queen, another YALC alum, shared her perspective on authentic leadership. Kayla underscored the transformative power of embracing one's true self, which fosters strong communities and ignites leadership potential.

SPOTLIGHT SECTION

Addressing Neurodivergent Mental Health Needs with PBS

At just 19 years old, Jordan Greene, a freshman at Spelman College, is already charting a path toward a career in law, driven by her passion for education reform and disability advocacy. Featured in PBS's *A World of Difference*, Jordan's personal journey navigating neurodivergence and mental health challenges highlights the resilience and potential within the neurodivergent community.

Jordan recalls hitting an academic wall in fifth grade despite being a strong A/B student. Suddenly, paying attention in class, retaining information, and staying focused became daunting tasks. Testing revealed that she had attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a diagnosis that initially brought confusion and self-doubt.



"I didn't understand what it meant to have ADHD or what a learning disability really was," Jordan shared. "I thought it meant that I wasn't smart or good enough, but really, I just learn differently."

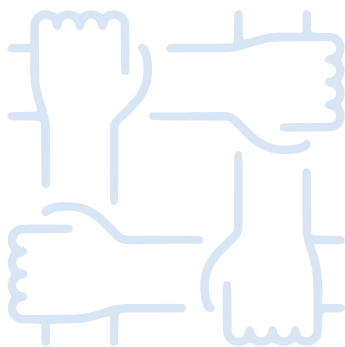
Since then, Jordan has embraced her neurodivergence, finding strength in understanding her unique learning attributes. Her story, featured in the PBS segment, underscores the importance of early diagnosis, meaningful support, and self-advocacy in shaping brighter futures for individuals with learning disabilities.

Jordan's story is a powerful reminder of the human potential within the neurodivergent community and the pressing need to address mental health with compassion, understanding, and actionable support.



Investing In Bright Futures

We use our platform to speak boldly about protecting and improving public education funding opportunities. We applaud beneficial moves and condemn regressive funding cuts.



This year, we celebrated a historic milestone with the largest applicant pool in the history of the Young Adult Leadership Council (YALC). From this competitive group, we welcomed 25 new members, marking the first in-person orientation since 2019.

During the orientation, these emerging leaders were equipped with tools, training, and resources to advocate effectively for themselves and their communities. The program included sessions on public speaking, storytelling, and engaging in policy discussions—skills critical for amplifying the voices of individuals with learning disabilities and attention issues.

YALC members quickly put their advocacy skills to work during the LD Day of Action in June, hosted in collaboration with our partners at Eye to Eye National. This flagship event brought advocates, educators, and policymakers together on Capitol Hill to share stories, discuss key legislative priorities, and advocate for policies that support the neurodivergent community.

Building on the momentum of our LD Day of Action and the incredible work of our YALC, we extended our advocacy efforts to Capitol Hill with impactful events and initiatives aimed at advancing policies that support individuals with learning disabilities.

Through these efforts, we continue to drive systemic change, ensuring that individuals with learning disabilities are supported, valued, and empowered at every level of society.



2023 BENEFIT LUNCHEON

AMPLIFYING IMPACT THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

On November 9, over 150 administrators, educators, students, and supporters gathered at the Bryant Park Grill in New York City for NCLD's annual benefit luncheon.

This event celebrated resilience, innovation, and advocacy for the learning disabilities community. Emmy Award-winning television personality Star Jones emceed the event, inspiring attendees to contribute to NCLD's mission of creating equitable opportunities for all.

We highlighted and honored the remarkable achievements of our scholarship recipients and *Everyday Champion* award winners.

This year, honorees included:



**Scholarships
Winners**



ANNE FORD SCHOLARSHIP
Brian Zakarevicz



ALLEGRA FORD THOMAS
Alexander Pawell



**Everyday
Champion
Award
Winners**



K-5
Melissa Paradis



6-12
**Toby Tomlinson
Baker**



POST-SECONDARY
Erin Mayo



The benefit also featured two compelling fireside chats on the transformative and complex relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and learning disabilities.

Moderated by James D. Basham, Ph.D., Professor at the University of Kansas, these discussions tackled both the opportunities and challenges AI presents to individuals with learning disabilities.

The first conversation explored whether tools like ChatGPT level the playing field for individuals with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, or if these technologies create additional barriers. Panelists included:

Ericka Rovira, Ph.D., Professor of Engineering Psychology, United States Military Academy, West Point

Eleazar Vasquez, Ph.D., Professor & TJEEI Director, University of Central Florida

The second conversation focused on the ethical and safety implications of AI usage, alongside its future applications for individuals with and without learning disabilities. Panelists shared key considerations for leveraging AI in educational, professional, and recreational contexts. This discussion featured:

Rylin Rodgers, Disability Policy Advisor, Microsoft

Sara Basson, Ph.D., Emerging Markets, Accessibility, and Disability Inclusion, Google

Kelly J. Grillo, Ph.D., Special Education Director, Northwest Hendricks School Corporation

Together, these discussions provided attendees with valuable insights into the evolving role of AI in fostering accessibility and innovation while emphasizing the need for responsible implementation.



Champion Research & Understanding

We create and disseminate factual and insightful data and reports focused on strengthening understanding and fueling equitable futures for students with learning disabilities and attention issues.



This year, through our convening in New Orleans, we reaffirmed our commitment to collaboration and understanding marginalized communities. This event brought together our Professional Advisory Board, The GRAD Partnership, local educators, administrators, caregivers, and parents to address “Building Student Success Systems to Support Students with Learning Disabilities.”

These discussions uncovered critical insights about graduation pathways and the systems needed to support students effectively. The findings were shared through a comprehensive white paper and a four-part video series, now available on [NCLD's YouTube channel](#). The series provides practical strategies for educators and families nationwide.

Launching a National Survey with WestEd

Building on this momentum, NCLD partnered with WestEd to launch a nationally representative survey of educators and young adults, ages 18-24, with learning disabilities. During the kick-off meeting in Washington, D.C., the team outlined inclusion criteria, sampling strategies, and survey domains to ensure robust and actionable data. This survey aims to identify trends, challenges, and opportunities for individuals with learning disabilities and those who serve them.

In tandem with this initiative, we collaborated with our communications team to develop a strategy for the upcoming State of LD Report, which will feature seminar-style videos highlighting critical issues in the field.

Shining a Light on Systemic Inequities

Throughout the year, NCLD used data to shed light on systemic inequities. Our federal data snapshots, funded in part by the Gates Foundation, analyzed mathematics and reading performance from the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress for students with specific learning disabilities, identifying areas for targeted support and improvement. At the state level, we examined ethnic and racial disparities in graduation rates, offering a clearer picture of equity gaps and areas for intervention.

These findings underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to ensure all students have equitable opportunities to succeed.

Driving Advocacy with New Resources

These efforts culminated in a new resource, *Unfulfilled Promises, Unfulfilled Potential*, developed specifically for our flagship event, LD Day of Action. This resource, aimed at driving conversations during advocacy meetings on Capitol Hill, explored fourth and eighth-grade reading and mathematics scores using our new Pathways to Change approach. It provided policymakers with a fresh lens to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing students with learning disabilities, paving the way for informed and impactful action. In tandem with this initiative, we collaborated with our communications team to develop a strategy for the upcoming State of LD Report, which will feature seminar-style videos highlighting critical issues in the field.





SUPPORTING EQUITABLE POLICIES

We actively work to shape local and national policy to reduce barriers and ensure equitable opportunities and accessibility for students with learning disabilities and attention issues.

Leaving a Mark on Capitol Hill

In September, we hosted our first in-person Hill Briefing since the pandemic, welcoming over 45 attendees from 25 Capitol Hill offices, the U.S. Department of Education, partner organizations, parents, and young adult advocates. This event provided a platform to strengthen NCLD's presence on Capitol Hill following a global pandemic and spotlight the experiences of students with learning disabilities. We reaffirmed our federal priorities:

- The Respond, Innovate, Succeed, and Empower (RISE) Act
- The College Transparency Act
- Increased funding under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Additionally, we hosted a panel discussion, *Fulfilling the Promise for Students with Learning Disabilities*, moderated by Director of Research & Innovation, Dr. Amelia Malone, featuring:



Dr. Erica McCray
University of Florida
College of Education



Kimberly Eckert
Oxford Teachers College,
Reach University



Alondra Gonzalez
Young Adult Leadership Council
& NCLD Board Member



Athena Hallberg
Young Adult Leadership
Council Alumna



Stepping into Workforce Development



Our advocacy efforts didn't stop there. This year, we officially launched our Workforce Development Data project, collaborating with two researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This initiative aims to analyze data from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor to better understand how individuals with learning disabilities participate in federal workforce development programs. The findings will inform key policy recommendations for Congress and the Department of Education on major workforce issues.

As we continue to champion the needs of individuals with learning disabilities, this project represents a crucial step in bridging the gap between education and workforce opportunities. By turning data into actionable insights, we aim to empower policymakers to create more inclusive and equitable pathways for success.

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

Financial Report

Total Revenue
\$1,279,208

Total Expenses
\$4,184,531

**Net Assets
Beginning of the Period**
\$10,684,218

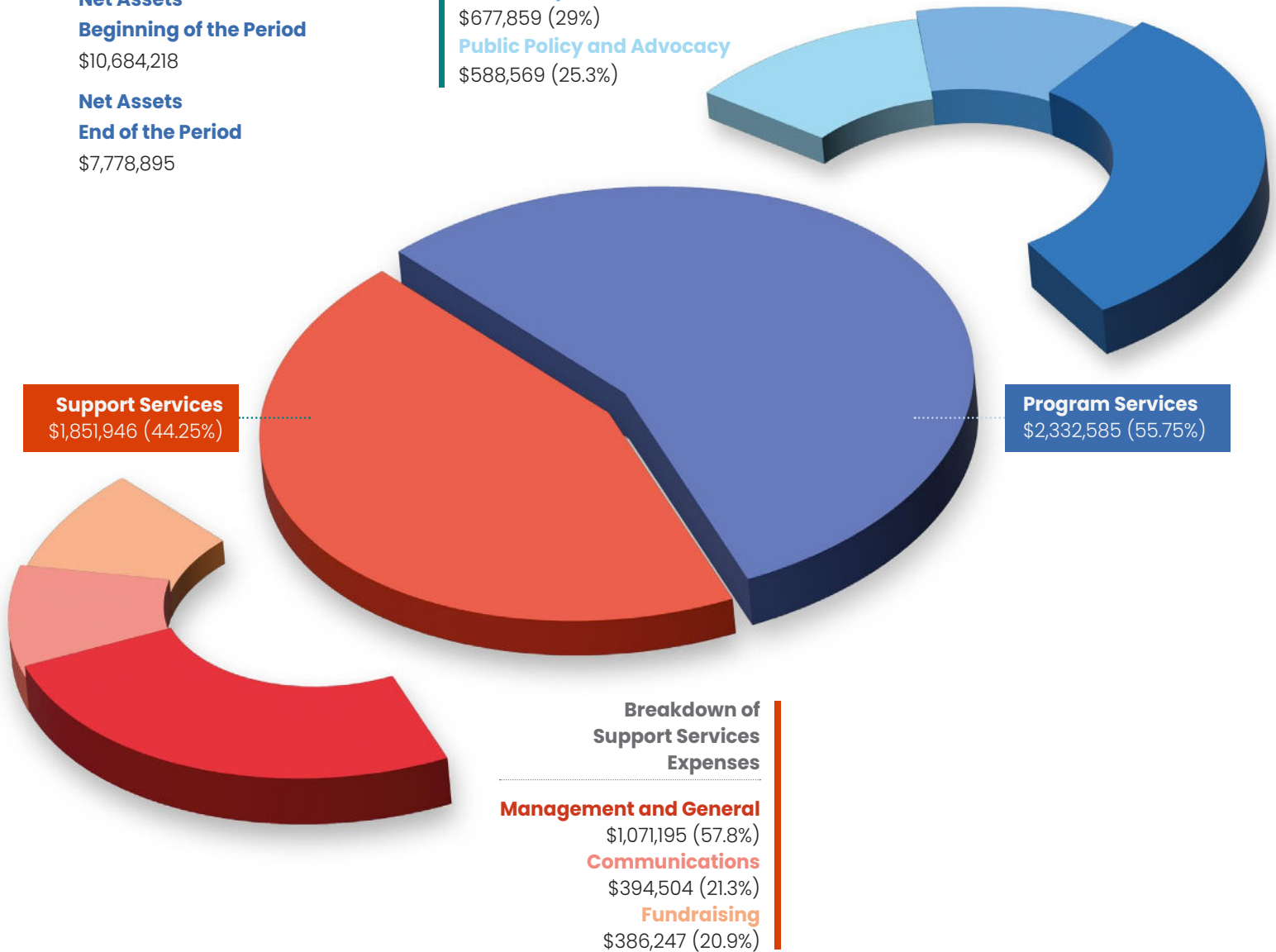
**Net Assets
End of the Period**
\$7,778,895

Breakdown of Program Services Expenses

LD Resources and Research
\$1,066,157 (45.7%)

Leadership
\$677,859 (29%)

Public Policy and Advocacy
\$588,569 (25.3%)



Breakdown of Support Services Expenses

Management and General
\$1,071,195 (57.8%)

Communications
\$394,504 (21.3%)

Fundraising
\$386,247 (20.9%)

Board of Directors

Margi Booth, Co-Chair

Joe Zimmel, Co-Chair and Treasurer

Ken Plevan, Secretary

Kristy Baxter

Jody Bellows

David Chard, Ph.D.

George Duran

Jenna Ellis

Shanti Fry

John G. Gantz, Jr.

Alondra Gonzalez

The Hon. Thomas H. Kean

Brian Hindo

Mark A. Michael

G.M. O'Connell

Cassia Schifter

Anne Ford, Chair Emerita

Team

Jacqueline Rodriguez, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer

Kena Mayberry, Ph.D., Chief Operating Officer

Amelia Malone, Ph.D., Director of Research & Innovation

Joey Hunziker, Director of Leadership & Organizing

Cierra Mangal, Director of Communications

Lindsay Kubatzky, Director of Policy and Advocacy

Jamille O. White, SHRM, Director of Human Resources and Operations

Saashya Rodrigo, Ph.D., Principal Researcher

Brittany Greer, Senior Program Manager

Kate Bartlein, Senior Project Manager

Nicole Fuller, Policy Manager

Victoria Rayol, Project Manager, Digital Marketing

Adolfo Ferrario, Development Associate

Shayna Harris, Research Associate

Mackenzie Schondelmayer, Communications Associate

Jessica Snyderman, Policy Research Associate

Patricia Cook, Executive Assistant

