



 **READY** FOR SCHOOL  
Holland, Zeeland & Hamilton

Holland, Zeeland & Hamilton

a better beginning

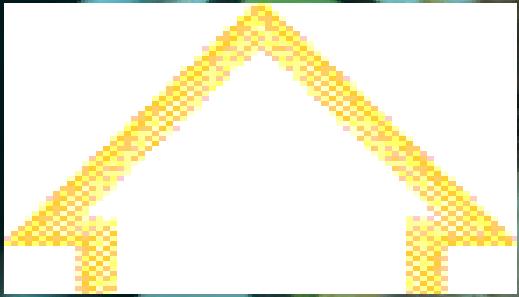
A vibrant, hand-drawn map of the world where each country is filled with a unique color. Overlaid on the map are several handwritten messages in black ink:

- Our Future
- Contest
- Finally Embodied
- Finally Embodied
- Happy Healthy

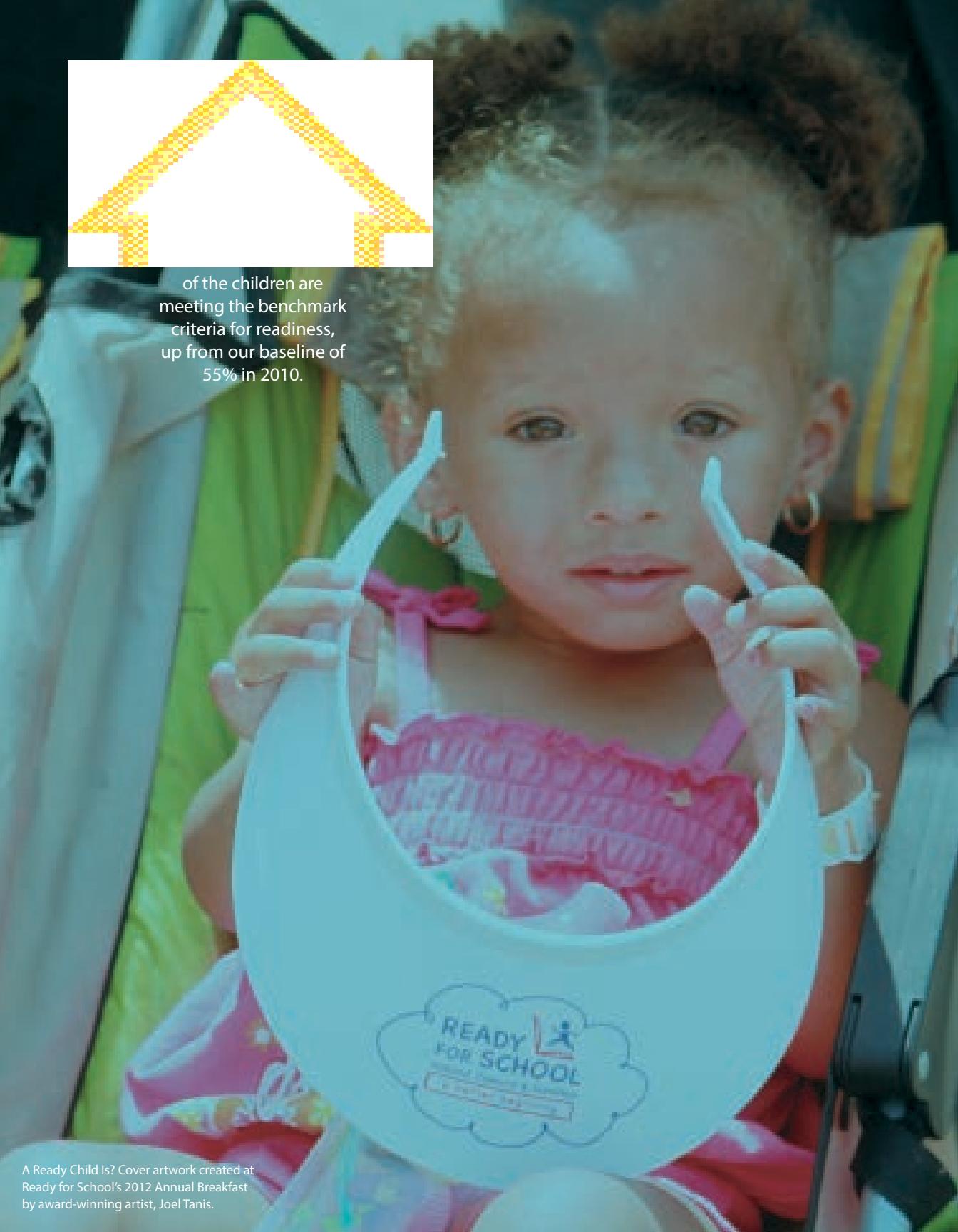
The map also features a blue wavy line representing the ocean.

# 2012 Report to the Community

confirmer



of the children are meeting the benchmark criteria for readiness, up from our baseline of 55% in 2010.



# GREETINGS TO OUR COMMUNITY

We must begin at birth, or sooner, to change the future for our children. It is during those first 1,000 days that connections are made in the brain, determining how a child will learn throughout his or her life.

As with any social problem we strive to solve, we must first uncover the source. Where did the problem begin and where must we focus in order to have the greatest return on our efforts? Whether we are looking to decrease the number of families living in poverty, improve health outcomes, decrease crime rates, improve graduation rates, or improve college access, the source always comes back to our babies. Our 2012 annual breakfast guest speaker, Sterling K. Spiern, President and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation said it best, "It not only takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a child to raise a village." Our children are our future; they are the future business owners, entrepreneurs, doctors, teachers, engineers, initiative drivers, innovators and parents.

Ready for School, works alongside parents, family, friends and neighbors, as well as doctors, schools, employers and churches, to help parents become the very best teachers for their child. Ready for School partners with our community's childhood professionals to improve the quality of care and educational experiences for children outside the home. We have also removed barriers parents have identified as keeping them from providing the best early education experiences for their child.

This past year we experienced explosive growth as we scaled up every effort to create a community of readiness where all children thrive and reach their full potential. Additionally, we expanded our reach to include our neighbors from Hamilton. By working on a community level, we have built trust within our neighborhoods as we adapt to the specific needs of our families. We are able to connect quickly to resources and draw upon our networks to fill gaps in services in a way that will best aid our families. We are grateful for the many and varying investments our community has made to improve the lives of our children.

We are so proud to be a part of a community that gets it!



Bruce Los  
Chair, Board of Directors



*Bruce Los*  
*Patricia Sosa VerDuin*

Patricia Sosa VerDuin  
Executive Director, Ready for School



**2,850**

children, 0–5 years, reached through  
Healthy Beginnings partnerships with  
the Holland Community Health Center  
and Intercare Community Health Network.

# HEALTH INITIATIVES

Parents, especially expectant and new mothers, view their physicians as trusted sources for developmental information. Parents are encouraged to have their infants and toddlers (ages 0–5) attend 12 well-child visits with their doctors. Ready for School is dedicated to strengthening the relationship between parents and their child's doctor, helping them provide a healthy beginning by becoming partners in their child's overall success.

## REACH OUT AND READ LAKESHORE INITIATIVE

In fall of 2012, Ready for School launched the Reach Out and Read Lakeshore Initiative with the goal of having all children ages 0–5 years connect regularly with their health care provider on literacy, as well as health. This will initially be achieved by prescribing and providing a free, developmentally appropriate book at each well-child exam in the provider's office. Using the existing well-established and trusted Reach Out and Read program, we have coalesced with physicians to navigate the program's guidelines and expectations. By the close of 2013, we anticipate all physician offices serving children ages 0–5 years in our community will have an active Reach Out and Read Program. Kudos to our community!



Of all referrals to Ready for School's Healthy Beginnings program, 27% were due to speech delays. In 2012, we developed and secured the funding for Ready Set Talk, a speech therapy program for preschool aged children to be piloted in 2013.

In 2012, Ready for School followed the experiences of four teen mothers who we connected with community resources, documenting the obstacles they encountered and the gaps in services they identified.

## ELI'S STORY

Growing up, I never knew the importance of reading to your kids at a very young age. When I first had my son in 2006, it never crossed my mind to teach him letters, numbers, and colors because I thought that was for the school teachers. Bringing him to the Holland Community Health Center was a very good thing because here they taught us to read to him and teach him at home. That would prove to be very helpful, because today he is a very bright student. A 1st-grader and top of his class, he is always getting compliments on how smart he is. We never thought that reading to him at such a young age would have this much of an impact on his academics. We are extremely grateful for the Reach Out and Read program in his physicians' office, and will continue to use this method at home with our future children.



Eli Lopez, Father of a Holland Community Health Center patient

Eli is now employed by Ready for School as a Community Health Worker out of the Holland Community Health Center and is using his experiences and career as a way to give back and educate families at the clinic

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

If we are to truly make a difference in the futures of our children, we must first engage the parents. In 2012, Ready for School staff and volunteers participated and/or hosted 69 community, employer, neighborhood or church events to connect with parents.

### EMPLOYER OF YEAR AWARDS

At our annual breakfast each December, we recognize two "Employers of the Year" that exemplify how an employer can advance the work and awareness of Ready for School by promoting early education to their employees and connecting new parents to information. In 2012, Gentex and Plascore were the recipients of the award. Both were recognized for their efforts in adopting local preschools.



We recruited four parent ambassadors – bilingual parents who reside within opportunity zones – who share in our mission and serve as connectors in the neighborhoods to bring parents together.



Ready for School rented an ice cream truck and drove through neighborhoods, providing ice cream and books to children while connecting with their parents on resources and education.



Awareness of the Ready for School brand by parents of incoming kindergartners has increased from 35% in 2011 to 49% in 2012.



**17,616**  
direct or indirect connections with children were made in 2012

# EDUCATION INITIATIVES

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Each month, Ready for School gathers preschool center directors and in-home childcare providers for roundtable discussions to network, share ideas and identify obstacles or areas where support is needed for them to provide the very best quality care.

## PEARL'S STORY

In my experience of being a part of the Ready for School round table, I have grown as a daycare provider. I love the resources and free training they provide. I also enjoy getting together once a month with other providers, some who have been in business 20+ years and glean from their experiences. I was introduced to Ready for School two or so years ago by a friend who attended one of their meetings. At first I thought this was just another program to tell us all what we were doing wrong, but it has turned out to be the best thing. They have come alongside me and given me the tools to be a better daycare provider, and provide my families with quality daycare. They also have provided me with the tools and resources I need to give the children a great start to school. Thank you to all who give of their time and money to help us give the children in our care a bright future.



Thank you, Pearl Garcia



Ready for School and CDS Head Start partnered to open the first public/private preschool classroom in the county.



Eighty-one early childhood professionals were trained on kindergarten expectations through Building Bridges.

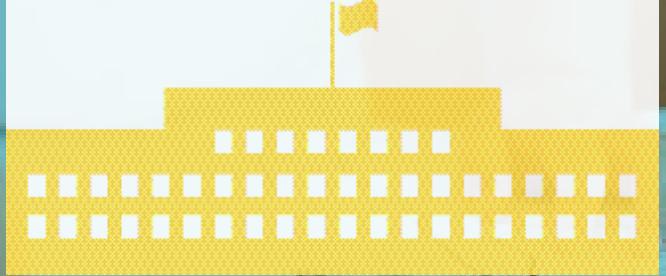


**25**

early childhood professionals  
were granted education  
scholarships to advance  
their credentials.

**397**

early childhood professionals  
attended professional  
development trainings.



**203**      **354**

children received preschool  
tuition assistance in 2012.

families representing 619  
children attended a  
Play n Learn Literacy Group.

## KINDER CAMP

This three-day kindergarten orientation was attended by 625 children (up from 90 in 2011), in 46 classrooms in 16 schools.

## HOME BEFORE SCHOOL

In 2012, Ready for School kicked off Home Before School, a series of free parent training events offered in the evening and open to all parents of children ages 0–5 years. These events offer parents information, strategies and materials to assist them in engaging with their children.

## READY SET SCHOOL

Some families are in need of one-on-one intervention. Soon, Ready for School will pilot Ready Set School. Developed by a team of early education specialists, this new parent curriculum was designed to train volunteers to be partners with parents, helping them become the very best teachers to their child.

## BRANDIE'S STORY

Ready for School was and is a blessing. I found Ready for School at a Plascore company party where my mom works. We struggled to put my sons through preschool and knew it would be a challenge for my daughter. I was so thrilled when we got the call that she was blessed with a grant to go to preschool. She is learning socialization skills and how to govern herself in a classroom, and the best part is they welcome her as she is, an opinionated, charismatic little spitfire of a three year old. Thank you Ready for School for allowing us to prepare for her future.

Mother of preschooler



## MYA'S STORY

I just wanted to take a minute to say "thank you" for the financial help that you have blessed us with by covering Mya's preschool tuition. This has been an amazing journey of ups and downs. God seems to always know when and how to send a little help and encouragement our way. Mya's first day of school was yesterday and she LOVED it... She talked about it all day and she can't wait to go back tomorrow! Thanks again for your gift...We truly appreciate it!!!

Mother of preschooler



# 2012 SUPPORT

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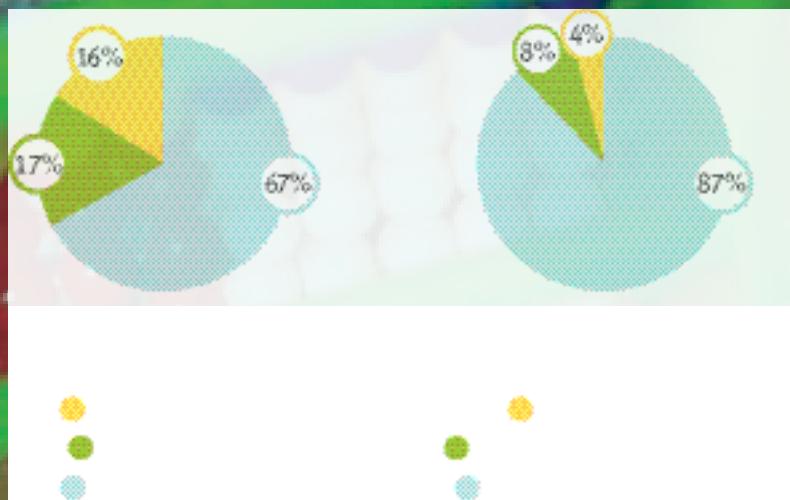
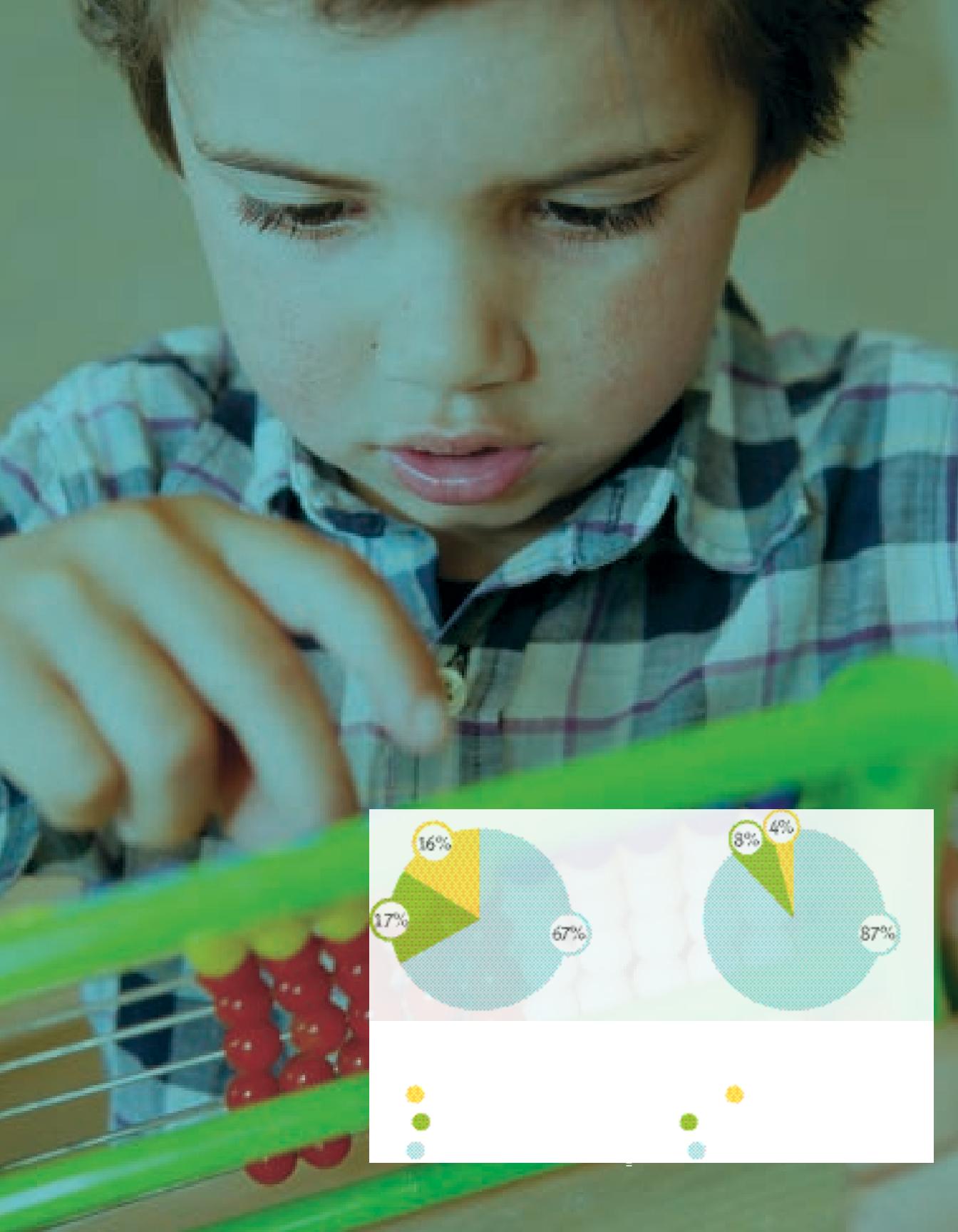
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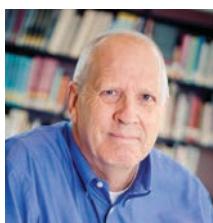
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A house is filled with objects, but a home is filled with far more. People. Moments. And surroundings that remind us of both. For years, families have relied on Howard Miller timepieces to serve as those reminders.

We're proud to support Ready for School and our community.

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## Healthy Beginnings. Healthy Futures.

Holland Hospital is proud to support Ready for School's comprehensive initiatives to improve early childhood development. Like Ready for School, we understand the vital role parents play in early childhood education and healthy outcomes. Holland Hospital engages parents through education, nursing outreach, parent advocates and community classes and events, all reinforcing the importance of healthy beginnings for healthy futures. Holland Hospital is With You for Life.

