



History of The Community Group: Creating opportunities through education since 1970.

The Community Group began in 1970 as Community Day Care of Lawrence, Inc., a small preschool with an enrollment of twenty children. As the first students outgrew preschool and the needs of families expanded, Community Day Care programs adapted to meet their needs. Over the years, as the organization established new programs, expanded existing ones, and diversified services, it has maintained a commitment to the original mission—to create, manage, and nurture high quality programs focused on education and related services that support families. The organization's service model consistently views children and families at the center of a larger circle that includes neighborhoods, schools, cultural groups, employers, government agencies, and health and human services organizations.

In 1974 the **Latchkey Enrichment Program** was established to provide quality out-of-school-time programs for children previously served in the organization's preschool programs. Program locations have varied over the years; all current sites are based in public schools. Curriculum and program activities have been expanded to include learning projects that link to in-school learning goals. The program also utilizes a lakeside day-camp facility during the summer months.

The **Family Child Care Program** began in 1975, when it became clear there was a need for a home-based early childhood model that could provide care to infants and toddlers as well as older children. This program model includes flexible, in-home learning and care for babies and young children and employment opportunities for parents and other adults in our community.

In 1984 the organization started the **Teen Parent Infant/Toddler Program**, one of the first programs to care for the children of teens in the state. This program model addresses the needs of both the teen parent and her child; young mothers are able to attend school and participate in supportive programming for young parents while their babies are cared for and taught in a safe, loving, and developmentally appropriate environment.

During the 1980s the Latino population in Lawrence almost tripled. In response, Community Day Care created a unique workforce development initiative to prepare Latinos for entry level employment and career advancement in the early education and care field. The Initiative led to the establishment of Los Amigos Child Care Center, a minority business enterprise providing preschool and school age programs. Los Amigos attracted families from throughout the city; the center became a model replicated by other Latinos in our community.

Throughout the years, Community Day Care preschool programs were opened in a variety of locations in Greater Lawrence, including the campus of Northern Essex Community College, and a textile mill. Andover Community Child Care, located on the Campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, provided early learning and child care for Andover families, with priority spaces for Phillips Academy staff and faculty.

In 1984 Massachusetts provided funding to create a network of child care resource and referral centers. **Child Care Circuit** (a DBA of Community Day Care, Inc.) was designated as the resource and referral agency for a group of cities and towns north of Boston that has grown to include more than 60 communities. Child Care Circuit has also provided voucher management services, issuing more than 80,000 financial assistance vouchers each year. Child Care Circuit's training program provides general education and technical assistance, training in early childhood development, and an extensive resource library to providers of early education. The training program has expanded steadily over the years, adding seminars, workshops, CEU courses and Spanish language programming. The program has also developed partnerships with providers of higher education throughout the region to provide training and postsecondary education for educators and providers.

Child Care Circuit has also established a Family Network, which offers programming that supports parents as the first and most important teachers of children from the prenatal period to the early elementary school years. In 1995, Child Care Circuit also initiated a corporate program, which provided enhanced resource and referral services for employees of corporate clients.

In the mid-1990's the door to the establishment of charter schools in Massachusetts was opened by the Education Reform Act of 1993. Community Day Care Board members, together with parents and staff, seized the opportunity to build on the foundation created by Community Day Care. They applied for and were granted approval to open a public charter school for youngsters in Lawrence.

In September 1995 **Community Day Charter Public School-Prospect** opened as Community Day Charter School. The school was launched in a one-story building that housed Kindergarten through grade 4. As it expanded to include students through grade 8, the school added two additional buildings and organized the school into 3 sections: the Early Learning Center, the Lower School, and the Upper School. All three buildings have significant ties to the city's past. The Early Learning Center is located in the former Lawrence Public Library, the Prospect Hill campus, which houses the Lower and Upper Schools, is located on land that was purchased and developed by members of the founding families of Lawrence. Today, the school is managed by The Community Group, but has established its own governing board of parents, business people, and community representatives.

In fall 2009 **21st Century Community Learning Centers**, a partnership between The Community Group and Lawrence Public Schools, were opened. Managed by The Community Group, the centers represent a unique collaboration between school administration, teachers, and community partners to deliver project-based learning to students outside the regular school day. Professionals from the community collaborate with 21st Century teachers to provide enriched learning experiences for students throughout the city.

In 2010 The Community Group was awarded one of 21 grants from the U.S. Department of Education to plan a Promise Neighborhood for the Arlington Neighborhood of Lawrence, MA. The agency led planning for changes that would improve outcomes for children and catalyze a transformation of the Arlington Neighborhood. Community partners collaborated to do data analysis, resource planning, and community organizing. The Arlington School was the focus of work groups, student focus groups, parent organizing, and a project that brought together the community to build a new playground for the school.

Fall of 2011 brought another milestone: MATCH Community Day Public Charter School was launched in Boston. The school is the product of a collaboration between Community Day Charter Public School and MATCH, a successful charter school operator in Boston. MATCH Community Day implements teaching strategies that have proven to successfully educate English language learners at Community Day in Lawrence where all students begin a path to academic achievement, high school success and readiness for college.

In July 2012 The Community Group became the fiscal manager for the **Lawrence/Methuen Community Coalition**, a resident-based coalition that works with a network of neighborhood associations focused on the prevention of child abuse, substance abuse and domestic violence.

Following the success of Community Day Charter School in closing the achievement gap for its learners, the organization was granted approval to open two additional K1-8 charter schools in Lawrence. **Community Day Charter Public School-Gateway** and **Community Day Charter Public School-R. Kingman Webster** opened K1-grade 1 classrooms in August 2012. Each school will add a grade each year until each reaches full capacity of 400 students in grades Kindergarten 1 through grade 8.

In August 2012 the state appointed superintendent-receiver of the Lawrence Public Schools (the first school district in Massachusetts placed into state receivership) contracted with The Community Group to manage the turnaround of a chronically underperforming school. The renamed **Community Day Arlington Elementary School** is replicating the successful operational management, instructional, and parent engagement practices developed at Community Day Charter.

Today, Community Day Care programs are known as **Community Day Learning**, and The Community Group, a DBA of Community Day Care of Lawrence, Inc., operates the following programs:

- Community Day Learning, education and care programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school age children, and teen parents
- Community Day Charter Public School-Gateway, a K1-8 public school in Lawrence
- Community Day Charter Public School-Prospect, a K1-8 public school in Lawrence
- Community Day Charter Public School-R. Kingman Webster, a K1-8 public school in Lawrence
- Community Day Arlington Elementary School, a K-4 public school in Lawrence
- Community Partners Initiative, an education consulting and training program
- Child Care Circuit, a child care resource and referral program

A central office team manages the programs, providing financial management, development, data, information technology, human resources, and communication services.