

The Hill CenterSM

YEAR IN REVIEW **2014-15**



Hill Upper School teacher, Ms. Kathy Klein, with Brad Hutchens.

After receiving a learning disability diagnosis as a teenager, Brad Hutchens, Class of '00, discovered The Hill Center through a friend who was already enrolled in the School Year Program. As a glimpse into his future career, Brad then proceeded to “sell” his family on the idea that Hill was the only place he wanted to be for his senior year of high school - and they agreed. For Brad, it was the beginning of a brand new chapter and he now refers to this life changing year as **“the gift of a senior year at Hill.”**

Brad went on to the University of North Carolina Wilmington after Hill. He graduated in 2004 and then channeled his strong work ethic and fierce determination into his career in sales. Today Brad sells dental equipment and has been promoted numerous times, receiving multiple awards for his outstanding performance. He is a stand-out at his company, for which he wholeheartedly credits Hill.

He shared that even now, 15 years later, he still uses the skills he learned at Hill every day - whether it's writing effective emails or using math skills to piece together sales figures and important financial data. **Hill is always with him.**

His message to current Hill students is to focus on the gifts that are unique to each student.

“You are at a place that allows you to learn the way that you were meant to learn, achieve things that you may not have ever thought were possible, and to succeed. Let nothing hold you back.”

Brad Hutchens, Class of 2000
Road Less Traveled Award - 2015

MESSAGE FROM HILL LEADERSHIP



Students. Teachers. Learning.

When I think about The Hill Center, these are the three words that immediately come to mind.

Hill academic programs provide **students** with the foundational skills and confidence they need to succeed in school, and in life.

Hill trainings and instructional methodology empower **teachers** to unleash their own talents to meet students where they are and help them grow.

and the education landscape is changing rapidly. Twenty percent of students struggle in school due to learning differences and attentional issues. Many more struggle with basic reading, writing, and math skills. We too often hear stories of North Carolina's failing schools, over-burdened teachers, and ill-prepared students. Hill has developed programs and strategies to address these realities. Hill is helping students and teachers across the state succeed every day. Our challenge now is to find the scalable, sustainable path to reach even more of them.

“Every student needs the chance to succeed.”

Uniting these two is a constant focus on **learning** and a core belief that all students can learn, and all teachers want to help their students grow. They both simply require the tools, strategies and support they need to work hard and be successful. That is what The Hill Center programs have to offer.

We hear powerful stories of learning and growth from students, alumni, parents, teachers, and tutors every day. We have shared a few of them in the pages that follow. I assure you that there are so many more out there, and even more yet to come as Hill itself continues to learn and grow as an organization.

And Hill must continue to learn and grow, because the need is great,

The Hill Center was born thanks to the vision and generosity of George Watts Hill and his wife Anne. It has grown beyond their wildest dreams thanks to the dedication of longtime faculty and staff, the leadership of a committed board, the partnership of educators and organizations beyond our walls, and the philanthropy of many families, foundations, and corporations.

Thank you for being a part of the community that has made Hill what it is today. Thank you in advance for helping us write the story of what Hill will be tomorrow. Our students need us. Our teachers need us. Our state needs us. May we all keep learning and growing together.

Beth Anderson

Beth Anderson, Executive Director

HILL'S STRATEGIC VISION

Grounded in nearly 40 years of successful teaching and transformational student learning, the Strategic Vision we developed during 2014-15 strengthens the foundation that will increase Hill's impact on students and educators.

Through a deep engagement process with our stakeholders – faculty and staff, students and parents, Board members, alumni, supporters, district and organization partners – we created a new framework that will underpin Hill's continued evolution and growth.

SOLUTIONS

Hill is uniquely positioned to develop and disseminate programs for students and educators given the depth of our experience and breadth of our programs.

REACH & DIVERSITY

Hill is already working with public, private, and charter schools in 18 districts across North Carolina. We will continue to build strong partnerships and refine our programs to reach more, and more diverse, populations.



STRENGTH & RESILIENCE

Hill's people, programs, and partnerships support us in our goal to further strengthen our community, enhance our communications, and sustain and improve our operations – all in service of our mission.

EFFECTIVENESS

The Hill Methodology produces rich data on student achievement. Our new, digital Hill Learning System will help us efficiently capture and analyze data, and produce timely and relevant reports for students and educators.

EXPERTISE

Hill faculty and staff are experts in their fields, and we have incredible access to other leaders in the learning differences arena. Our expansive network keeps us on the cutting edge of research and practice.

PRIORITY INVESTMENTS



Serving as Board Chair through our Strategic Visioning process was an incredible experience. I had the privilege of learning with and from deeply committed stakeholders, from Hill faculty and parents to philanthropic partners, each of whom

demonstrated a passion for enabling student success. Their voices made this vision possible.

Whether students have a diagnosed learning difference or attention challenge or simply need extra support and individualized instruction to learn how they learn best, Hill programs help students of all backgrounds – and the educators who serve them – achieve success. Our goal is to support even greater success within Hill's walls and beyond by focusing on the areas identified in our Strategic Vision framework.

This process also helped us clarify our most immediate funding priorities. In the coming year, we will focus on developing the Hill Learning System (HLS), a digital learning platform for students and teachers that will enhance our core reading program and also help us expand our reach to even more learners. We will also prioritize increasing accessibility by fundraising for student and teacher financial aid. Finally, we seek to strengthen Hill's expertise, serve our community, and elevate our position as a leader in the field through investing in our own professional development and sponsoring a high quality Community Education Series.

We are grateful to each of you for joining us on this journey - with your support, we know we help students reach their potential and achieve academic success as confident, independent learners.

David Riddle, Board Chair

HILL LEARNING SYSTEM

The Hill Learning System (HLS) integrates a proven approach to delivering personalized reading remediation with high quality teacher professional development and useful analysis and reports. It provides teachers with the tools, time, and data they need to teach struggling learners to read.



We are investing in further development of the three components of HLS - classroom literacy app, teacher training platform, and data reporting - because we believe this comprehensive approach will allow us to effectively reach the students and teachers who need Hill's programs most.



FINANCIAL AID

Knowledge is priceless. But for students struggling to learn, and the teachers struggling to meet their unique needs, effective interventions and training can be too expensive.

In order to make our programs accessible to more families and teachers, we must pursue philanthropy to increase the financial aid available for our School Year and Teacher Training Programs.



EXPERTISE

As we seek to enhance Hill's position as a leading expert and resource in the field of learning differences, we aspire to invest more in professional development for all Hill teachers, tutors, and staff to ensure we remain on the cutting edge of research and best practices.

We are also focusing on ensuring Hill has the resources required to serve as a valuable community resource. Hill hosts national and local experts as part of our free, public Community Education Series, and sends faculty and staff to present at conferences around the state and the country.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Avery and Ashe Counties

A Literacy Partnership with The Hill Center

Thanks to support from Mike and Cathy Fields, **The Hill Center is partnering with schools and educators in Avery and Ashe Counties to implement the Hill Reading Achievement Program (HillRAP).**

Hill and the districts are working together to develop a vision and implementation plan to train teachers in Avery and Ashe Counties to deliver HillRAP to their students, train Hill Mentors to support teachers locally, and collect data on student progress and feedback on our work together, so that we will enhance our impact each year.

The project is off to a great start! In the 2015-16 school year, Hill has trained 16 teachers from 10 different schools, including both elementary and middle schools. **The response to HillRAP by both teachers and students has been inspiring,** and the schools are eager to train more teachers and secure more critical instructional materials for students.

Mike and Cathy Fields have issued a new \$50,000 challenge grant to expand the work in Avery and Ashe Counties and to enable the Avery school district to be a pilot site for the Hill Learning System (see page 5). **The Fields will match every new contribution received for this project up to a total of \$50,000!**

For more information about how you can help improve literacy in Western North Carolina and join the Fields Challenge, please contact Emily Oliver at eoliver@hillcenter.org.



One morning our school was on a delayed schedule and we were not going to have our full class. But when I asked the students to go back to their classes, they all started protesting together! "No! Can we please read in our notebooks and take our timed tests?!" I cannot express the pride I felt for their learning in that moment. I kept the students with me that day and they all set records! It's happening at Banner Elk!

Amanda Lynch Wallace
Banner Elk Elementary School

AVERY AND ASHE COUNTIES

Meet Ruth Turnmire, Literacy Specialist, Mountain View Elementary School

The individualized Hill Reading Achievement Program (HillRAP) targets each student's needs, and I can see the "lightbulbs" come on when they master a skill. They challenge and encourage each other because they feel safe to learn in an environment at their developmental level without the stigma of being below grade level.

They don't realize how much they are learning and growing in their skills with the quick-paced lessons. It's funny when I ask drill questions and they want to answer for and support each other. They remind each other, "remember to answer in a complete sentence" or "clip the sounds."

Students love the materials that allow them to work at their own pace, and the program offers a great comprehension tool to expose them to the same reading skills at a lower level where they can feel successful. They are so excited when we finish one book and can start the next one. It's great to see kids who are almost two grade levels behind with such a drive to make their goal and tackle the next list of words!

Meet Sara Gray Horne, Hill Outreach Trainer and Partnership Manager

It has been one of the highlights of my career to have had the opportunity to work with dedicated and talented educators in Ashe and Avery Counties. Their enthusiasm for HillRAP and desire to implement the program with fidelity has led to significant student growth in reading.



Sara Gray Horne delivering a teacher training workshop



Missy Waycaster teaching a HillRAP class at Newland Elementary



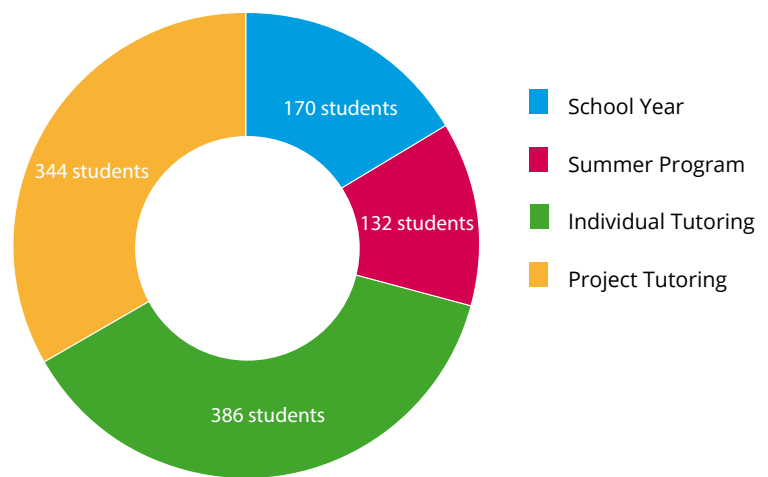
Reading Mural at Crossnore Elementary

SERVICE SNAPSHOT

The Hill Center serves students and educators in a variety of ways. Each year we **directly serve approximately 1,000 students** in our School Year, Summer, and Tutoring programs, and **over 1,500 educators** attend workshops and trainings at Hill.

In 2014-15, Hill served:

- 170 students: School Year Program
- 132 students: Summer Program
- 386 students: Individual Tutoring
- 344 students: School/Project Tutoring



1,500

of whom

educators attended a Hill workshop in 2014-15

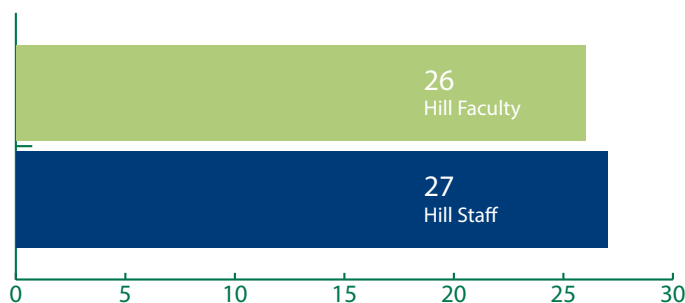
79

who reached

teachers became certified to deliver HillRAP

1,580

students served by 79 HillRAP certified teachers



In 2014-15, The Hill Center consisted of 26 Faculty and 27 Staff. We are incredibly proud of each employee for their roles in making Hill an invaluable resource for students and teachers.

SERVICE IN NORTH CAROLINA



Students from schools in highlighted counties receive Hill's Methodology either at The Hill Center or in their school setting.



HILL SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAM



The Dombcik family: Jeffrey, Jeanne, Bennett, and Addison.

Meet Addison Dombcik, Hill Student

Always fun, energetic and eloquent, Addison Dombcik had no trouble making friends when she started attending a local Montessori school in kindergarten. But what she and her parents, Jeanne and Jeffery Dombcik, quickly noticed was that while she was keeping pace with her peers socially, she wasn't academically.

In second grade, after two difficult years, Addison was tested and diagnosed with dyslexia. While the diagnosis helped Addison realize she learned differently than others, she still suffered from anxiety and depression and dreaded being pulled out of her classes. The once bubbly and outgoing girl was now unrecognizable to her parents, and they knew something had to change.

Addison's parents started researching alternative school options for their daughter, and The Hill Center jumped to the top of their list right away due to our reputation and expertise with learning differences. When they visited Hill for the first time, they felt an immediate connection and knew this was where Addison needed to be. Addison enrolled in the 2014-15 School Year Program for 4th grade, and Jeanne says that she saw a difference in her during her very first week. To their relief, their happy, outgoing daughter was back almost instantly.

On the way home from school one day Addison even said to her mother, "I can't believe it - everyone at Hill is just like me."

While Addison now feels the comfort of being with other students just like her, her parents also cherish the camaraderie and support they have found with other Hill parents who have had similar journeys. Jeanne shared that after two years trying to figure out the best option for Addison, "Hill was the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

SCHOOL YEAR @ HILL

170

students

26

faculty

65

base schools

2

*3-hr sessions
daily*

HILL TUTORING PROGRAM

Project Tutoring Spotlight: Y.E. Smith Elementary

Since 2010, Hill Tutoring has had a remarkable partnership with Y.E. Smith Elementary Museum School and Principal Letisha Judd. Hill-trained tutors provide Hill Reading Achievement Program (HillRAP) classes for students reading well behind grade level.

Last year, tutors worked with 16 1st graders from October 2014 through May 2015, thanks to funding from Durham Public Schools (DPS) and East Durham Children's Initiative (EDCI). According to district data, two-thirds of these students started the program "far below proficient." By the end of the project, all students involved grew two to three reading levels, with three students reaching proficiency

With significant additional investment by the Goodnight Educational Foundation, Hill is tutoring 60 students in the 2015-16 school year. These 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students were all reading at least one year below grade level and are receiving intensive reading remediation via HillRAP during the school day. Hill is also providing literacy professional development for Y.E. Smith faculty and working closely with the Y.E. Smith team to develop plans for additional tutoring and training in the future.



Meet Helen Tharrington, Hill Tutor

"The students gain so much confidence in such a short amount of time because of the fact that they see so much progress right away. The confidence is really what shows first. **It's amazing to see how much better they feel about themselves as their reading skills develop.**"

TUTORING @ HILL

Hill Tutoring serves students in two different ways. We work with **over 80 trained tutors** each year, who reach **almost 750 students** total. Hill Tutoring offers **methodology tutoring**, focused on reading, written language and math - in a 1:1 or small group format, at Hill or in other schools or locations - and utilizes the same methodology as Hill's School Year Program. Individual content tutoring services are also provided in **core subjects, study skills, and student enrichment classes.**

HILL SUMMER PROGRAM



Meet Micara Lewis, Summer Faculty

Originally drawn to The Hill Center as a way to serve her community, Micara Lewis has been an integral part of our Summer Program since 2000. As the Assistant Dean of Business Technologies and Education Programs at Durham Technical Community College during the school year, each June she switches gears from educating adults to teaching rising 5th graders reading, writing, and math.

Even though Micara has become an expert at teaching the Hill Methodology, she admits she felt like a novice when asked to beta test our new iPad-based Hill Learning System (HLS) this year. HLS is an

innovative technology platform enabling educators to deliver Hill's reading program effectively and efficiently to students.

In Summer 2015, our Hill Reading Achievement Program (HillRAP) was delivered through the HLS iPad application instead of the paper-and-pencil method Micara had used for years. Micara's apprehension quickly went away once she started using HLS, and she instantly saw how transformative it was for her students. "My students become more engaged in class and they were genuinely excited by the new technology," she shared.

As Micara says, "HLS added another layer of excitement. It made learning more fun for the students and me!"

SUMMER @ HILL

5

weeks

2

sites

128

students

32

teachers

Meet Luwonna Oakes, Literacy Specialist and Hill Mentor, Davie County, NC

Luwonna Oakes is entering her 30th year in the classroom - and her 19th as a literacy specialist. Becoming a literacy specialist changed the course of her career; once she saw how foundational, and transformational, learning to read is for realizing each student's future, there was no going back.

As part of the first group from Davie County to take HillRAP training in 2008, Luwonna saw quickly that the approach was just the right fit for many of her learners. To this day, her greatest joy is seeing the growth in students year over year - not only in their reading skills, but in how the structure of the program teaches students tools they can use in any of their studies. For her, "drill is the most powerful component - students see the purpose right away, and start bringing in practice questions from their other classes."

While Luwonna is teaching HillRAP in the classroom, she is also mentoring other educators in Davie County in how to implement it with their own students. She loves the opportunity to share what she's learned over the years, and to pick up new ideas and perspectives from teachers approaching the curriculum for the first time.

What is a Hill Mentor?

A Hill Mentor is a teacher who has gone through an additional year of certification in HillRAP, including coaching and observations from Hill's Outreach Trainers. Hill Mentors work in school districts across the state, supporting teachers locally as they implement HillRAP in their own classrooms.

HILL **TEACHER TRAINING**

HILL IN THE COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERIES

The Community Education Series features programs designed to assist with the concerns and issues facing adults raising children today - particularly children with learning differences. The events are free and geared towards families of students with learning differences, educators, psychologists, and anyone interested in learning more about topics impacting our community.

The Community Education Series expanded dramatically in 2015-16 and included even more **nationally recognized speakers and experts in the field of learning differences.**

Recent events have included **Dr. Cheryl Chase** discussing executive functions; LD/ADHD advocate and motivational speaker **Marc Hoffman**, discussing how his struggles with learning differences led to success in life; and a presentation on multi-sensory learning as it relates to the brain with respected author, teacher trainer and nationally-recognized speaker **William Van Cleave**. These events generate large crowds and thoughtful conversation during the session – as well as after.

As we look to the future, we already have scheduled events with other nationally-known speakers on the topics of **math literacy, reading interventions, reframing the concept of learning** and other relevant topics in the world of education and learning differences.

Our 2016-2017 calendar of events will be ready by early Fall 2016, but please visit **www.hillcenter.org/CES** to stay up to date on Community Education events and make suggestions for future topics you would like to see discussed.



1ST ANNUAL HILL MILE



THANK YOU

to everyone who attended our **Inaugural Hill Mile Race and Kids' Dash** on April 26, 2015!

The day included three different events:

- A **competitive one mile race** with chip timing
- A **recreational one mile** event for casual runners, walkers and ramblers
- A **kids' dash** for the little ones

In addition to racing and celebrating the winners and participants, the day also included tons of non-athletic fun, like **food trucks, a bounce house, music, and spirit capes!**

Even more, it was an awesome way to bring the whole Hill community together to **celebrate all of the amazing students, educators, and friends of Hill** who make us what we are.

At the end of the day, Hill Mile welcomed **350 registrants** and raised over **\$17,000** to support student financial aid and teacher professional development scholarships!

Thank to you to all who ran, walked, spectated, donated or in any way supported the Inaugural Hill Mile!

Special thanks to our event sponsors and in-kind donors:

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VISIT WWW.HILLCENTER.ORG/HILLMILE TO GET INVOLVED!

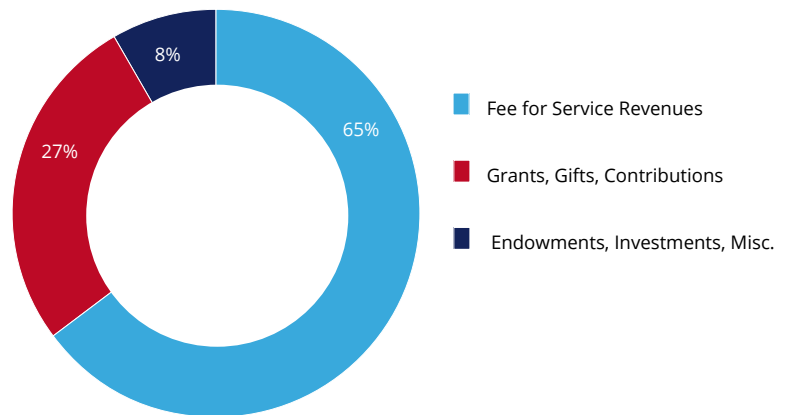
HILL 2014-2015

FINANCES

Since 1999, Hill's first full year as a 501(c)3 non-profit, independent auditors have issued an unqualified opinion each year, reporting that the financial statements are presented fairly in all material respects and are in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the U.S.

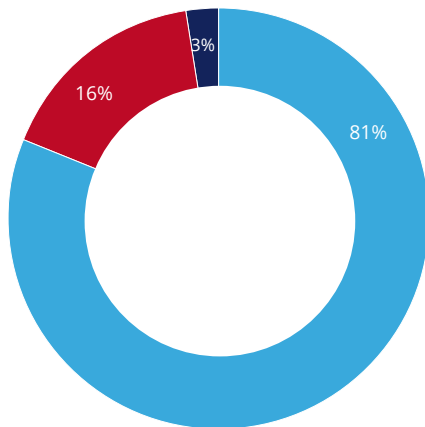
Sources of Funds: Revenues

Operating revenue totaled \$6.8M in 2014-15. Primarily due to Academic Program tuition, fees for service revenues were the largest source of funds.



Uses of Funds: Expenses

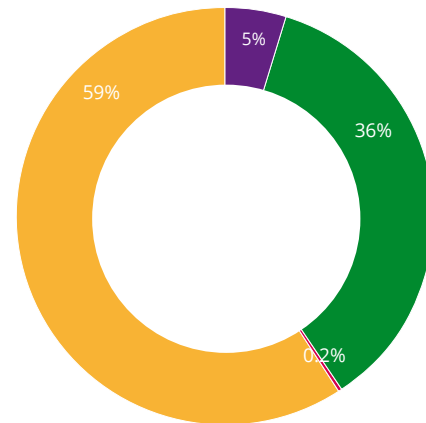
■ Program Services ■ General & Administration ■ Fundraising



During 2014-2015, The Hill Center spent 81 cents out of every dollar directly on program services. Operating expenses were \$6.2M.

Fundraising: Gifts, Contributions, and Grants

■ Corporate ■ Foundation ■ Government ■ Individual



Individual and foundation gifts in support of school district partnerships, teacher scholarships, and other outreach efforts comprised the majority of contributions. Total 2014-2015 fundraising revenues were \$1.8M.

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2014-15

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* *deceased*

"We need to put Hill programs in place in every school district and every school in North Carolina. That would be one of the great dreams to come true in this state."

—Governor James Hunt

GIVING

HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

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