

2008 Annual Report

Mission

Big Learning, Inc. was founded in 2007 to support children’s school and life success through hands-on, real world learning. We focus our efforts on economically disadvantaged children and those at risk for other reasons, including English language learners and children with learning disabilities. Big Learning, Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.



Castles make great hats!

Program Activities

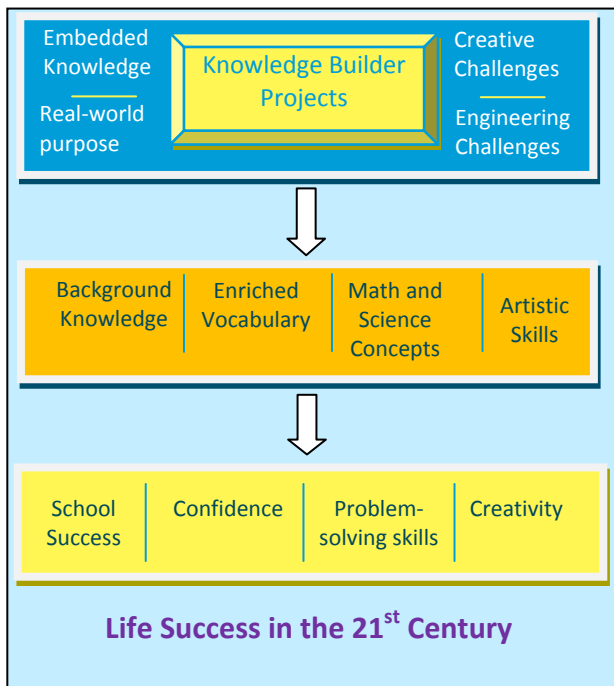
Big Learning offers programs for children, programs for families, and programs for parents. In 2008 we made huge strides in developing our afterschool curriculum for children, while also continuing to offer programs in all three areas. Approximately 700 children and 200 adults participated in Big Learning workshops in 2008.

Knowledge Builder Curriculum Enhancements

Big Learning now has developed two complete 8-week series in its afterschool Knowledge Builder program, *Toymaking*, and *Building Big and Small*. These series have become our flagship offerings and our most complete example of Big Learning’s teaching strategy. Our program goals for 2008 focused on further developing *Toymaking* and *Building Big and Small*, to enable them to be widely offered. To this end, we developed comprehensive **teaching guides** for both series. These guides contain the information teachers need to prepare for and teach each class. Our materials also include detailed **videos** showing how to construct each project, plus colorful **posters** that bring the outside world into the classroom.



A student tests her balloon-powered art car in Toymaking



Big Learning’s Teaching Strategy

During 2008 we articulated a consistent teaching strategy for accomplishing our mission (see diagram); this strategy unifies our online, afterschool, and family programs.

Process for Curriculum Development



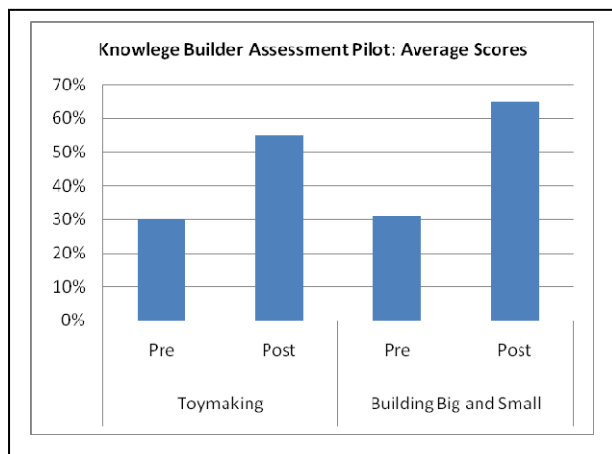
Children building a tipi in Building Big and Small

In 2008 we solidified our product development process based on the Interactive Design method developed at the Institute for Research on Learning. In this method,

products are developed through multiple iterations of field testing. In each iteration, we incorporate data, feedback and enhancement ideas from students and teachers. This process yields an easy-to-use product that accomplishes our learning goals and deeply engages our students. In 2008, we completed three rounds of testing and revision of our curriculum and teaching materials at a local elementary school.

These tests allowed us to streamline each of the 16 projects, achieving a 25% reduction in per-student cost, as well as an improved student experience.

Evaluation results



A second goal for 2008 was to begin to collect hard data on the efficacy of Knowledge Builder. We tested students on their prior knowledge of the concepts covered in our classes, and then retested them after the class, a standard pre-post evaluation technique. Test questions addressed both knowledge and self concept, in keeping with Knowledge Builder’s multiple goals. We were pleased with student gains, and revised both the curriculum and the assessments to increase the power of each.

New Funding

By the fourth quarter of 2008, we felt that Knowledge Builder was ready for a wider test. We obtained a grant from the Carl M. Freeman Foundation under its FACES program to teach Knowledge Builder at the Silver Spring (Maryland) Boys and Girls Club. The FACES program is designed to fund projects by small, innovative non-profits.

We also obtained in-kind funding for this initiative from Staples of Silver Spring. The grants funded class materials, the development of a teacher training program, and the development of enhanced program evaluation systems. The club will teach both series to 20-30 students during the winter and spring of 2009.

In 2009, Big Learning will focus on bringing the existing Knowledge Builder series to more children in our target audience, as well as on developing new series.

Family and Parent Programming

We continued to offer family programs and workshops during 2008.

Parents and children at Beauvoir National Cathedral Elementary School attended a series of three toymaking workshops: *Castles and Catapults*, *Things that Fly*, and *Things that Spring*. Children and parents designed and built whimsical toys with their parents, and we taught parents strategies for keeping the learning going at home.



Parents and children design and build a medieval castle together

Later in the year we presented the Bethesda Library’s Summer Reading Kickoff Event, titled “Insect Extravaganza.” Hundreds of children and their parents enjoyed a live insect presentation and an assortment of insect-related hands-on activities.



Wearable dragonfly helps children understand the structure of insect wings.

We also continued to offer our parent workshop, *Raising Great Learners*. This workshop helps parents understand the relationship between school-based and

family-based learning, and the critical role family activities play in education and life success beyond preschool and throughout childhood.

Big Learning Online

Biglearning.org, our web site, offers hundreds of free knowledge-building family activities and resources. Parents can find reviews of children's educational books, toys, and web sites, real-world ways to help children build math concepts at home, easy science activities, and lots more.

Biglearning.org had over a half-million page views in 2008.

Board of Directors and Management

Management

Dr. Karen Cole is Big Learning's Executive Director. She founded Big Learning, directs our organization, and develops our curriculum, workshop materials, and web site.

Dr. Cole is an award-winning educational psychologist and author. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from Stanford University in 1995. Prior to founding Big Learning, Dr. Cole worked for over twenty years in educational research and development, specializing in real-world learning, math education, and educational technology. She is co-author of the book, "Increasing Student Learning through Multimedia Projects," published in 2002 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). She has written for a variety of publications for educators and presented at national education conferences.

Board of Directors

Jennifer Knudsen is a senior mathematics educator at the Center for Technology and Learning at SRI, International, an active volunteer at her daughter's elementary school, and, of course, a parent.

At SRI, Knudsen designs programs and materials for students and teachers, helping a broad range of students learn high-level mathematics even at the middle-school level. She directs a research project

funded by the National Science Foundation, developing and testing new professional development techniques for teachers. Previously, at the Institute for Research on Learning, she designed innovative, technology-rich programs for students, parents and teachers, which were one source of inspiration for the Big Learning framework.

Knudsen was a high school mathematics teacher in New York City public schools and, as a volunteer, developed an artist-in-residence program bringing weekly art experiences to the youngest children at her daughters' elementary school. Her education includes a BA from the Evergreen State College and graduate studies at Stanford University and Columbia Teachers' College.

Camille V. Harris is the Program Manager at the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals. She was until recently the Branch Director of the Silver Spring (Maryland) Branch Boys & Girls Club. She joined the board after working with Big Learning to start offering the Knowledge Builder program at the club. Previously, Harris managed the SHINE Program, a teen pregnancy prevention program at Clubs in Northeast and Southeast DC. Under her management, the SHINE Program won a Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Honor Award in the area of Health and Life Skills, and an Outstanding Prevention Program Award from Healthy Teen Network. Harris has a B.S. degree in Biology from Hampton University and a Master of Public Health degree from The George Washington University. Before working with Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington, Harris had extensive experience working and volunteering with youth-serving and health-related organizations.

Jim Cole serves as President of the Board of Directors. He also serves as Treasurer; in that role he oversees our budgeting and accounting. He has over 20 years of experience in leading-edge software development for companies including Adobe and Intuit. He also served as CFO of Escatech, a startup technology company. As founder of the Covero Consulting Group, a successful computer consulting firm, Cole brings substantial business management expertise as well as technological savvy to the Big Learning

organization. He holds an M.A. degree in Economics from San Jose State University, and a B.S. in computer science, *Phi Beta Kappa*, from Indiana University. He has seven U.S. patents for computer design.

Financial Data

Big Learning's primary revenue sources in 2008 were grants, program service fees, and web site revenue. For the year, Big Learning had a surplus of \$3,857, which represents 31% of total revenue.

Summary financial data for 2008 is shown in the tables below.

Big Learning, Inc. Financial Summary, 2008	
Revenue	
Grants	\$6,500
Public support	\$100
Program service	\$4,807
Web site	\$810
Toymaking kits	\$93
Total revenue	\$12,310
Expenses	
Facilities and equipment	\$1,818
Payroll	\$1,525
Workshop development & materials	\$1,256
Insurance	\$1,875
Internet/Web	\$566
Printing & copying	\$465
Other	\$948
Total expenses	\$8,453
Surplus	\$3,857

Contact Information

Big Learning's web site is www.biglearning.org. We can be contacted by email at info@biglearning.org. Our mailing address is:

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Garrett Park, MD 20896

Big Learning, Inc. Statement of Cash Flows, 2008	
Operating Activities	
Net income	\$3,857
Adjustments to reconcile Net income to net cash provided by operations	
Accounts receivable	(\$637)
Credit card	\$265
Net cash provided by Operating Activities	\$3,504
Investing Activities	
Accumulated depreciation	(\$11)
Furniture and equipment	(\$179)
Net cash provided by Investing Activities	(\$190)
Net Cash	
Net cash increase for the period	\$3,315
Cash at beginning of period	\$2,752
Cash at end of period	\$6,067

Big Learning, Inc. Balance Sheet, 12/31/2008	
Assets	
Current Assets	
Checking Account	\$6,037
PayPal	\$31
Accounts Receivable	\$637
Total Current Assets	\$6,705
Fixed Assets	
Accumulated depreciation	\$11
Furniture and equipment	\$287
Total Fixed Assets	\$298
Total Assets	\$7,002
Liabilities and Equity	
Current Liabilities	
Credit card	\$320
Loans from related parties	\$1,000
Total Current Liabilities	\$1,320
Total Liabilities	\$1,320
Equity	
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$1,825
Net Income	\$3,857
Total Equity	\$5,682
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$7,002