



Leading the Way Strategic Plan 2011-2016

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Leading the Way Strategic Plan

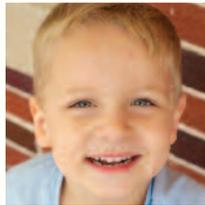
NCRC is poised to embark on a new, innovative and important chapter, building upon its long and storied history of leading the way as a model preschool.

The past decade saw great changes and improvements as NCRC successfully achieved the goals set forth in its last strategic plan, adopted in 2000. Foremost among these was the long-awaited and mission-critical renovation of our physical facilities. With a newly renovated, state-of-the-art, “green” building that includes additional classroom space, meeting rooms for faculty and parents, an elevator, a large motor space and an improved playground, NCRC built a solid physical foundation for the future.

In addition, over the last ten years, NCRC increased staff salaries and benefits to our benchmarked target, helping us to attract and retain highly qualified and talented teachers. We continued to broaden our diverse school community. We strengthened our governance, refined and further developed our curriculum and programming, provided increased tuition assistance for families, continued our long-standing commitment to the inclusion of children with special needs, increased community participation in school activities and worked to refine our status as a model preschool program.

The *Leading the Way Strategic Plan for 2011-2016* aims to expand NCRC’s leadership in the field of early childhood education by further strengthening the key elements of the NCRC model and renewing our focus on research, partnerships and external advocacy. It is the culmination of two years of review and deliberation by the NCRC Board of Trustees and school leadership, and it reflects critical input from broad sectors of the NCRC community, including parents, alumni, staff and faculty, and outside experts.

NCRC was founded in 1928 with support from a grant from the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial to learn more about early childhood development. Over its remarkable history, NCRC’s play-based, collaborative approach to preschool education has benefitted generations of children. Its highly skilled faculty, warm and nurturing environment, research-based practices and curriculum, commitment to diversity and inclusion, and focus on the whole child continue to make it a uniquely enriching place for young children and their families.



It is our conviction that serving as a model of early childhood education means extending the impact of NCRC beyond its immediate community. As NCRC further shares its experience and expertise, a greater number of young children will benefit from this successful model of preschool education. The *Leading the Way Strategic Plan for 2011-2016* sets a course to achieve this broad and ambitious goal.

NCRC's Mission

Founded in 1928, the National Child Research Center provides a collaborative approach to preschool education in an environment that nurtures the whole child, fosters partnerships with families and is committed to the inclusion of children with special needs. A highly trained, multi-disciplinary faculty employs developmentally appropriate practices, supported by ongoing professional development and sound research. Essential to its role as a model of early childhood education is the creation of a diverse, respectful community. Both within and beyond the school community, NCRC seeks opportunities to advocate for all children and their families.

Vision: Lead as a Model of Early
Childhood Education





Over the next five years, we will enhance our program to effectively lead as a model of play-based early childhood education and to advocate for all children both within and outside the school. The following seven goals and underlying objectives will direct the Board of Trustees and school leadership as we enhance our model and pursue opportunities to lead the way in the external community.





Increase NCRC's leadership role in the
early childhood development community



Collaboration and Leadership

We will increase NCRC's leadership role in the early childhood development community by sharing our model of play-based preschool education with others, collaborating with other early childhood educators both locally and across the country, learning from other leaders in the field and better communicating the distinctive attributes of the NCRC approach. *Our objectives are:*

- ▶ Define, communicate and share NCRC's model of early childhood education with members of the early childhood development community, both regionally and nationally.
- ▶ Continue to strengthen partnerships with local public schools to have an impact on the expansion of high quality early childhood education for all children in the region.
- ▶ Identify and pursue opportunities to utilize our model to benefit children both within and beyond NCRC.
- ▶ Utilize technology to increase accuracy and usefulness of data collection and statistical reporting.
- ▶ Expand research opportunities at NCRC and ensure use of current research to inform and shape programmatic offerings.

7



A group of hands, belonging to people of various ages and ethnicities, are shown holding a large, round, woven basket made of straw and sticks. The basket is filled with more straw and sticks, and some blue string is visible. The background is a blurred green field. The text "Cultivate and strengthen the NCRC community" is overlaid on the image in white, serif font.

Cultivate and strengthen the NCRC community



Community

We will strengthen the NCRC community by supporting, educating and engaging parents and families; fostering partnerships in support of NCRC's educational mission; and bolstering relationships with alumni and neighbors. *Our objectives are:*

- ▶ Continue to support, educate and engage parents and families at NCRC through school events, classroom activities, conferences, specialist resources and ongoing communication.
- ▶ Foster collaborative partnerships among faculty, staff and families.
- ▶ Expand relationships with extended family and alumni through continued engagement, communication and school events.
- ▶ Explore the establishment of online communities related to NCRC.
- ▶ Continue to cultivate positive relationships with neighbors and the local community.

9



Leading the Way Strategic Plan

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Ensure that NCRC is at the forefront of current methodology



Faculty and Staff Development

We will enhance our model school by continuing to hire and retain a diverse, highly trained, multi-disciplinary faculty, and by ensuring that NCRC is at the forefront of current methodology and emerging best practices in early childhood education. NCRC's faculty and staff will continue to employ developmentally appropriate, researched-based practices supported by ongoing professional development. *Our objectives are:*

- ▶ **Encourage and support faculty scholarship and participation in research** related to early childhood education and inclusive educational practices.
- ▶ **Evaluate options** to support advanced or specialized education for teachers.
- ▶ **Provide a collaborative, nurturing and rewarding environment** for teachers to share and learn from one another, and support faculty and staff communication and collaboration with updated technology and ongoing training.
- ▶ **Maintain or exceed the median of Independent Education (IE) salaries.**
- ▶ **Pursue strategies** to decouple tuition increases and faculty salaries.
- ▶ **Significantly increase** the annual professional development budget.
- ▶ **Seek opportunities to collaborate** with universities and other preschool programs in the area to create more formal teacher exchanges and apprenticeship programs.
- ▶ **Create a faculty and staff development speaker series** to provide specialized education on curriculum trends and current research.
- ▶ **Obtain accreditation** through the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS).



Build and maintain an
increasingly diverse environment



Diversity

As articulated in NCRC's mission statement, essential to our role as a model of early childhood education is the creation of a diverse, respectful community. To that end, we will continue to build and maintain an increasingly diverse environment in which every student, family and staff member feels welcome, included, reflected and celebrated. *Our objectives are:*

- ▶ **Maintain and continue to attract** a widely diverse student body.
- ▶ **Encourage greater socioeconomic diversity** at NCRC by, among other ways, providing increased tuition assistance to NCRC families and striving to keep tuition at an affordable level.
- ▶ **Ensure that NCRC continues to employ model practices and curriculum** with respect to diversity.
- ▶ **Continue to recruit and maintain** a diverse staff and faculty.
- ▶ **Broaden and actively encourage** community-wide participation and involvement at NCRC.
- ▶ **Increase the ability to track and understand** application, admission and enrollment trends as they relate to diversity.
- ▶ **Explore and facilitate options** for full-day programs.

13



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Enhance, improve and
expand the inclusion program



Inclusion Program

In recognition of NCRC's long-standing and mission-based commitment to the inclusion of children with special needs, we will further enhance, improve and expand the inclusion program so that it remains at the forefront of inclusive early childhood education; continue to incorporate best practices and the latest academic research on inclusion; and advocate for inclusive education for all children.

Our objectives are:

- ▶ **Strengthen inclusion program supports** for children, parents and teachers in the post-Bunny classes.
- ▶ **Enhance ongoing school support** for children with special needs.
- ▶ **Increase opportunities for specialized training and professional development** relating to best practices in inclusive education.
- ▶ **Continue to refine our admissions and outreach process** for children with special needs in order to attract a broader applicant pool and promote better understanding of the NCRC program in the community.
- ▶ **Increase internal and community understanding** about inclusion at NCRC.
- ▶ **Measure success and outcomes** of the inclusion model at NCRC in order to learn from and share findings regarding best practices.

15



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Establish NCRC as a leader in environmental sustainability practices and curriculum



Sustainability

NCRC is committed to the conservation, management and sustainability of resources in ways that are equitable to both present and future generations. As a model of early childhood education, we will engage in forward-leaning practices that establish NCRC as a leader in environmental sustainability practices and curriculum in the preschool setting. *Our objectives are:*

- ▶ Explore, develop and adopt sustainability practices in the school community and NCRC classrooms, and adopt a formal sustainability policy for the administration of the school.
- ▶ Continue to educate the entire NCRC community about sustainability issues and NCRC's sustainability programs.
- ▶ Research and adopt curriculum modifications that promote and appropriately teach sustainability at the preschool level.
- ▶ Identify and pursue health initiatives relevant for our school.
- ▶ Develop creative and environmentally responsible uses of NCRC's outdoor spaces, including the design of an "outdoor classroom."
- ▶ Actively pursue funding opportunities for sustainability initiatives at NCRC.

17



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A young child with dark hair, wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt with a red and blue logo and dark pants, is captured mid-air, jumping over a row of colorful cones (green, purple, orange) in a brightly lit playroom. The child's right arm is raised and bent at the elbow. In the background, other children are visible, and a white snowflake decoration hangs from the ceiling. The text "Secure NCRC's financial future" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Secure NCRC's
financial future



Fiscal Strength

Recognizing that NCRC's sustained financial health is imperative to its growth and further development as a model school, we will continue to expand and diversify the revenue of the school, exercise responsible fiscal management and build towards the establishment of an endowment.

Our objectives are:

- ▶ Launch and successfully undertake the *Leading the Way Campaign* in support of the mission of the school and this Strategic Plan.
- ▶ Maintain broad-based community participation in and growth of the Annual Fund and Tuition Assistance Auction, and expand the base of donors to the school.
- ▶ Build towards the launch of an endowment campaign within five years.
- ▶ Improve metrics for development functions of the school and the Board.
- ▶ Consider and pursue strategies to optimize enrollment and programmatic offerings in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- ▶ Manage the finances of the school conservatively to ensure continued fiscal health and security.
- ▶ Seek opportunities to increase revenue through external leadership and partnerships in the early childhood education community.
- ▶ Explore expanded funding through public and private grant opportunities.

19



Leading the Way Strategic Plan

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The *Leading the Way Strategic Plan for 2011-2016* is the result of a collaborative effort by the NCRC community. Faculty and staff, current and former parents, current and former trustees, and outside experts provided significant and valuable input that helped guide us in the formation of this plan. In addition, we are grateful for the support provided by a team of consulting volunteers from Compass, led by Catherine Potter.

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