

Strategic Framework

FOR

2025 and Beyond



START

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For nearly 135 years, SouthSide Early Childhood Center has pioneered early childhood education and support services. We are proud of this legacy and remain committed to our original mission to attend to the needs and futures of children and families.

And, we also recognize that more than a century later the myth of time finds us confronted by persistent, pervasive, still unresolved challenges that pose significant challenges and opportunities for the children and families that we serve. The occasion of this strategic plan calls upon us to both broaden our vision and deepen our work.

SouthSide is well poised to further its contribution to early childhood practice focused on equity, internally as a premier provider, and through its external thought leadership, advocacy and influence.

Evolution of Southside's Strategy

Recent strategic plans have appropriately responded to inflection points in the development of the organization: facilities, operations, and now equity. Now, in 2020, we call ourselves to higher action. From now through 2025, SouthSide plans to continue to hone the organization's work to pursue three priorities:

1

2

3

Centering Equity

How do we embed equity in SSECC's organizational practices and voice? Where should we focus first and how do we operationalize this commitment (i.e. staff and leadership, governance, data and learning, culture, teaching and instruction, parents and community).

Deepening Infrastructure and Scale

How do we engage SSECC's community (parents and guardians, "alumni," staff and board, field partners, etc.) to advance outcomes for children and families with which tools or models (e.g., programming, public education and advocacy, research, trainings)? How will we maintain programmatic excellence and scale impact? How will we continually assess, learn, and adapt?

Ensuring Sustainability

How do we build an operating and business model that allows us to pursue these strategies effectively and sustainably? How do we use our current core capacities and what new core capacities or resources do we need to develop, supplement externally through partnerships, or pursue?

This plan lays out a long-term vision for our Center and community and early childhood ecosystem that lasts beyond the span of this three- to five-year plan.

We consider this plan a “living document,” flexible as we embark on new activities and learn from them. It is our intent to grow into this vision using an agile approach driven primarily by our community of children, parents, families, educators, partners, champions and allies – what we will refer to in this plan as “The SouthSide Community.” It might be fair to say that this document represents more of a framework for action than a traditional strategic plan.

Over the next few pages, we further describe our vision and outline our intended outcomes and core strategies for getting there. We invite you to share your reactions and discuss how we can partner with you to advance this vision.

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Updates to Vision and Mission

We are updating our Vision and Mission in order to better reflect our expanded vision for our children, families, and community. These revisions have been shaped by many in the SouthSide Community and reflect our desire to focus both on excellence and active leadership for equity.

Vision

Through our revisions, we looked to capture an inspiring future that we want to work toward and that would reflect SouthSide's direction, purpose and unique contribution to early childhood education in St. Louis.

CURRENT VISION

Our vision is that all kids have the opportunity to become unstoppable through education.

UPDATED VISION

Our vision is that all kids have the opportunity to become unstoppable through education—to have the opportunity to choose their future in a world where success for children and families is no longer predicted by nor correlated with race.



Mission

CURRENT MISSION

SouthSide's mission is to create lasting opportunity in the lives of our children—and their families—by providing the best in early childhood education and support services. We put our mission into action through our four pillars of education, health, connection, and advocacy.

UPDATED MISSION


Every child has potential, but not every child has opportunity. At SouthSide, we know that early childhood education can be the difference between being left behind and leading the way. Our mission is two-fold:

Create equitable and inclusive learning opportunities and support services for all children and families

Work alongside families to eliminate bias and interrupt structural racism through our practices, programs, policies and platforms.

We put our mission into action through our four pillars of education, health, connection, and advocacy.

Next, this strategic framework moves to detail SouthSide's priorities for the next 3-5 years.

A young boy with a joyful expression is climbing a blue slide at a playground. He is wearing a blue baseball cap with a white logo, a dark blue t-shirt, white pants, and black sneakers. The background shows colorful playground equipment and green foliage. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the title text.

2020-2025 Priorities for Action

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2020-2025 Overall Strategic Priority

Scale impact of successfully equitable, inclusive, and high-quality early development and learning environment.

Governance

SouthSide believes in the importance of fostering inclusion, not just because we believe diverse perspectives help organizations, boards, and leaders operate more effectively but because we understand the very real risks a lack of equity and inclusion can create. Accordingly we will work diligently to not only expand the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity of our Board but also foster an inclusive governance culture that model early childhood leadership competencies, commitment to inclusion, to challenge, to welcome, to support of difference, to learning, and “walking-the-talk” of equity.



Leadership Development: Human Resources, Professional Development and Training

Foster and expand effective, inclusive talent management, human resources and professional learning practices for board, staff, parents and families.



Advocacy and Thought Leadership

Amplify external engagement efforts through expanded public education, advocacy, and organizing/movement building efforts.

One of SouthSide's greatest assets is our passionate and driven community. We will use a variety of tools and approaches to advance our updated vision for early childhood. Sometimes, these initiatives will be staff driven. At other times, we will support self-organized or ad hoc efforts driven by parents or others in our SouthSide Community. The first year of this strategic framework will be dedicated to exploring and developing a concrete advocacy agenda.

ACTIVITIES WILL INCLUDE:

- Creating a communication strategy to regularly share data and communicate progress and results across staff, leadership and families



Family Partnership

Continue to nurture meaningful relationships and partnerships with families such that families continue to feel included, have the resources they need to support their children and feel empowered to inform and advocate for their children and families' needs internally and externally. Here in particular, we do anticipate our work to significantly alter in form but deepen in terms of content and focus on building parent voice and leadership.





Outcomes and Implementation

Recognizing that our vision is long-term (we imagine 10 to 20 years), we map out initial priorities to help guide how we'll begin working toward this vision over the next 3 to 5 years.

Initially, our focus will be on:

- Rolling out strategy and identifying excitement and opportunity to build momentum and buy-in
- Strengthening leadership capacity (for board, staff, and parents and families)
- Enhancing technical, programmatic, and communications infrastructure
- Prototyping and building on small pilot project(s) that have emerged from work with local collaboratives and networks of providers (e.g. South City Early Childhood Network)
- Begin experimenting with and pursue additional revenue models

In subsequent years, we will move gradually into:

- Moving new pilots into more established efforts (such as initiatives or campaigns), especially around advocacy and thought leadership
- Learning from and assessing progress/momentum/impact
- Prioritizing, adjusting and pivoting as needed
- Planning for the future

Priorities are summarized in the implementation table below:

	YEARS 1-2	YEARS 2-3	YEARS 3-4	YEARS 4-5+
Priorities	I. Strengthen Infrastructure & Build Distributed Leadership	II. Build Community Capacity and Assess Pilots	III. Reflect, Adapt and Formalize	IV. Solidify and Plan for Next Iteration of SSECC
Milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage SSECC Community & create opportunities for programmatic alignment around new strategy and parent/family leadership Refine program areas (staff and parent/family-driven programs) Pilot advocacy and thought leadership strategy, plus other opportunities as appropriate (such as a codifying and sharing engagement model through professional development network) Shore up key gaps in capacity; continue strengthening internal operations Board recruitment (add parent voting member) and intentional reshaping of governance approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early staff- and community- driven projects under way Build cluster of advocacy and thought leadership projects as parent interest and capacity allow Continue to bolster capacity and strengthen board, staff, and parent leadership and professional development concretizing equity as core competency Develop evaluation plan Assess current and ongoing professional development needs to create annual and quarterly schedule of offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation on how to expand (if appropriate) Identify/revisit additional advocacy issues Revenue streams to support growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizationally excellent with optimal capacity and competencies built out Parents and families advancing and leading initiatives (clear wins) Evidence of local provider network learning ECC, K-5 adopt desired changes (more equitable and inclusive ECC system)

Conclusion

Our legacy emboldens us, and the present moment compels our own transformation to seed that for the next century of early childhood education in St. Louis.

At the conclusion of this Strategic Plan, we imagine a SouthSide Early Childhood Center that features:

- A robust, equity focused, family-centered, high-quality early childhood education best-tailored to meet the needs of, and prepare our children and families for kindergarten and their unstoppable futures,
- Strengthened infrastructure and deep knowledge and integration of the practices that best support the success, leadership and advancement of our children and families, and the ability to share those practices if not support the St. Louis early childhood ecosystem in implementing them, and
- A vibrant network of leader-full parents, partners and allies advancing our vision and values.



We want to extend our deep gratitude to the many people in our SouthSide Community and beyond who contributed their passion, wisdom and insight and who helped collectively to co-design this strategic plan. We look forward to deepening our shared leadership and working together toward equity to build the kind of Center we want to work in, and the kind of community which we believe can deliver on the promise of equitable and inclusive learning opportunities and support services for all children and families.





**Back to the
start!**