STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2024



CHILD START

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Plan Format

Strategic Focus Areas: Based on the themes derived from data and stakeholder input, these areas are the focus of planning efforts.

Goals and Objectives: Based on discussions of "what success would look like" for each focus area, goals represent an overall desired end-result and objectives provide specific results to be achieved.

Dashboard Measures: Metrics by which to track desired changes in productivity, effectiveness, efficiency and/or resource acquisition.

Strategies: The general means or methods used to arrive at the desired goal.

First Step Action Plans: First steps to operationalize strategies, associated with champions to facilitate the change effort, and a general timeline for the activity. This will produce learning used to adopt, adapt, or abandon tactics over time.

Champions: For each strategy, the person(s) who will initiate steps, track progress, and engage others in ongoing strategic thinking and doing.



From the Executive Director

Teresa Rupp

The purpose of this plan is to guide future priorities and decisions for Child Start during the years 2020-2024 we pursue our mission to provide early childhood services that prepare children for lifelong success.

The strategic planning effort received input from families and caregivers, staff, Board members, community partners and donors through interviews and surveys, as well as data related to trends, conditions, challenges and opportunities. The Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute conducted research to support decision-making and facilitated the planning process.

Board members and staff leadership met for a full day in early 2020 to brainstorm a vision for Child Start's future and guided the process. The Community Engagement Institute remarked that feedback from everyone at Child Start was unusually open and candid; everyone cared about making Child Start better, and everyone had ideas to contribute. It is so rewarding when others see what I think is best about Child Start: its people and their desire to make things better!

Our four big priorities for this plan are:

1. **Organizational Infrastructure:** Child Start employees and teams are supported to serve the community well and to develop career and leadership skills to take Child Start into the future.
2. **Programming:** Child Start programs are responsive to community needs, thoughtfully designed, and well-funded.
3. **Internal Alignment and Cohesion:** Child Start employees work together toward common goals.
4. **Effective Communications:** Child Start communicates effectively with all internal and external stakeholders.

As all of you know, I am nearing the end of my career. Whatever else I may do, I want Child Start to continue to succeed and make a difference for children and families in our communities. This plan, and all of the work it will require from multiple teams, is a great opportunity for Child Start staff to step into leadership roles and practice leadership skills. I encourage you to join a team and to work on some aspect of this plan that is important to you!

Leadership requires us to set big goals and sometimes to take risks, to find ways to go forward even when we are afraid. But doing the work together and using ALL of our talents and ideas makes it easier. I look forward to working with everyone on strategies, action steps and timelines in this plan.

Strategic Focus Area 1

Organizational Infrastructure

GOAL

Child Start employees and teams are supported to serve the community well and to develop career and leadership skills to take Child Start into the future.

OBJECTIVES

- Child Start is fully staffed with talented, dedicated employees who reflect the community they serve.
- Child Start provides its employees with individualized professional development and growth opportunities.

DASHBOARD MEASURES

- Increase staff retention
- Increase New Employee Satisfaction ratings
- Increase Employee Satisfaction ratings
- Consistent Individual Development Plan check-ins
- Annual data from Head Start Community Needs Assessment and Early Childhood Connections service evaluations

STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS, AND CHAMPIONS

1.1. Create emergency- and long-term succession plans.
[Timeline: September 2020 – June 2021]

- **1.1.1.** Identify initial key positions for which to develop a succession plan, beginning with the most senior-level position and/or the positions with incumbents nearest to retirement age. Then, reiterate this process for the next levels.
- **1.1.2.** Identify common skills required for success in initial key positions and develop staff to prepare them for succession into these key positions.
- **1.1.3.** Update job descriptions of initial key positions to accurately capture the responsibilities of the positions.
- **1.1.4.** Develop a process for internal recruitment for key positions (Connect interested and qualified employees to positions, enable managers to recommend staff for these roles, encourage staff to communicate interest in pursuing promotion into roles).

1.1. Champion: Executive Director

1.2. Research and analyze barriers and opportunities for staff recruitment and retention.
[Timeline: October 2020 – June 2021]

- **1.2.1.** Identify positions and areas that experience high burnout.
- **1.2.2.** Review hiring process – examine where Child Start recruits, what questions Child Start asks in interviews, etc.
- **1.2.3.** Develop opportunities for increased employee recognition.
- **1.2.4.** Clarify what types of employees Child Start is seeking.
- **1.2.5.** Clarify how Child Start can best advertise career opportunities.
- **1.2.6.** Construct position descriptions that will attract the type of employees Child Start is seeking.
- **1.2.7.** Explore technological solutions to paperwork and record-keeping challenges.
- **1.2.8.** Implement selected technological solutions to paperwork and record-keeping challenges.

1.2. Champions: HR Recruitment Specialist/Data Processing Specialist

1.3. Create an overall staff development and training plan.
[Timeline: October 2020 – May 2021 and Ongoing]

- **1.3.1.** Develop Individual Development Plan's (IDPs) for all staff. Make sure they include easily measurable/achievable goals, the employee's career aspirations, in addition to widely-shared training needs that drive inservice/pre-service plans. Make sure IDPs are revisited semi-annually, and are separate from employee "rating."
- **1.3.2.** Develop supervisors' skills, including Reflective Supervision, to support employees by identifying employee strengths, support employee interests, etc.
- **1.3.3.** Use results from monitoring (of quality, fidelity, etc.) to drive professional development opportunities for staff in-service or pre-service.
- **1.3.4.** Revisit the training scheduling process and update it to ensure that the training schedule is reliable, planned in advance, and clearly communicated.
- **1.3.5.** Prepare an onboarding plan such that employees receive only vital information when they are hired, and are continually instructed and supported over time.
- **1.3.6.** In the onboarding process, include education, skillsets, culture orientation (KDHE regulations, performance standards, curriculum, etc.).
- **1.3.7.** Include a representative from each program at new employee training.

1.3. Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

Strategic Focus Area 2

Programming

GOAL

Child Start's programs are intentionally curated, designed, and funded.

OBJECTIVES

- Child Start offers an array of programs which are aligned with community needs and the expectations of elementary schools.
- The parents served by Child Start are engaged with, and accountable to, the learning of their children.
- Child Start is equipped with the right resources to sustainably provide quality programs.

DASHBOARD MEASURES

- Annual review of programs/discussion with area public schools? Explore ways to gather schools' feedback about children's school readiness
- Increase parent engagement in their children's learning, as demonstrated by time spent/activities undertaken by parents with their children (measured by in-kind documentation)
- Increase Parent satisfaction with communication from their children's teachers and with what their children are learning
- Increase "in-kind" donations
- Develop new programs

STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS, AND CHAMPIONS

2.1 Develop and expand current Child Start services.
[Timeline: October 2020 – May 2021]

- **2.1.1** Consider new methods for providing services (example: virtual) and establish expectations for how these methods will be used (videos, etc.).
- **2.1.2** Analyze the current programming and curriculum and identify areas for improvement. Explore ways to gather schools' feedback about whether parents are prepared to support their children's success in school.
- **2.1.3** Perform a regional needs assessment to identify gaps and opportunities for services. Engage the entire organization in developing ideas. Explore ways to gather schools' feedback about children's school readiness.
- **2.1.4** Establish funding for additional services.
- **2.1.5** Develop partnerships for expanding services.

2.1. Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

2.2 Increase parent engagement.
[Timeline: October 2020 – Ongoing]

- **2.2.1** Revisit marketing for parent activities and consider: optimal times for events, parent interests, including opportunities for parent/children interaction, community-wide parent engagement (local libraries, etc.), incentives (food, child care, etc.).
- **2.2.2** Develop virtual services for parents.
- **2.2.3** Educate parents on the importance of their student's attendance.
- **2.2.4** Showcase parent talents (parents teach students about their areas of expertise).

2.2 Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

2.3 Develop a process to engage staff in curriculum selection.
[Timeline: October 2020 – Ongoing]

- **2.3.1** On an ongoing basis, review relevance and alignment of curriculum and supplementary techniques. Prioritize which methods to implement.
- **2.3.2** Provide parent training on child-led learning and implementation.
- **2.3.3** Develop a committee focused on curriculum selection. Work with local school systems to ensure curriculum alignment.
- **2.3.4** Identify funding opportunities for new curricula.

2.3 Champions: Education Senior Manager

Strategic Focus Area 3

Internal Alignment and Cohesion

GOAL

Child Start employees work together toward common goals.

OBJECTIVES

- Child Start teams are integrated and aligned with one another through open communication and collaboration.
- Child Start positions are clearly defined and fully supported.
- Child Start employees are safe and supported in their physical and mental wellbeing.

DASHBOARD MEASURES

- Teams working on Strategic Plan include staff from all programs; future teams include cross-team collaboration
- Increase number of events hosted for all staff; include an opportunity to introduce/highlight a few staff members and accomplishments at each event
- Increase in familiarity with names, titles, and work of other people and teams
- Increase data regarding employee satisfaction
- Increase number of approved common policies across Child Start

STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS, AND CHAMPIONS

3.1 Develop events, tools, and interventions to collaborate among all Child Start Employees.
[Timeline: October 2020 – June 2021 and Ongoing]

- **3.1.1** Identify barriers to collaboration.
- **3.1.2** Gather feedback from employees about what activities would help them build connections with one another.
- **3.1.3** Identify technology platforms that could be used to facilitate employee connections.
- **3.1.4** Host events with "breakout sessions" to get people interacting across programs (examples: games/activities, presentations on programs, etc.).
- **3.1.5** Identify methods to facilitate meetings in ways that are inclusive of all voices.
- **3.1.6** Develop a process for highlighting effective staff and successful projects.
- **3.1.7** Identify opportunities for collaboration (example: Early Childhood Connections trainers providing training for Head Start, and Head Start staff providing trainers for private childcare providers through Early Childhood Connections).

3.1. Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

3.2 Create common policy practices across Child Start to reflect Child Start's desired culture.
[Timeline: December 2020 – January 2022]

- **3.2.1** Review Child Start Code of Conduct and values. Articulate Child Start's desired culture.
- **3.2.2** Identify inconsistent or conflicting policies that will be standardized and aligned (example: process for offering raises).
- **3.2.3** Develop an ongoing, systematic process of policy review to ensure consistent and aligned policies across Child Start.
- **3.2.4** Create a Welcome to Child Start handout that communicates Child Start as a cohesive organization and includes instructions about where to direct questions and find resources.

3.2. Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

3.3 Identify staff safety concerns and implement protective policies (teachers and home visitors).
[Timeline: October 2020 – January 2022 and Ongoing]

- **3.3.1** Identify common safety concerns for off-site services.
- **3.3.2** Research policies and procedures of other Head Start agencies on proactive solutions.
- **3.3.3** Build plans to ensure safety for off-site services; share/train all staff.
- **3.3.4** Provide de-escalation training for staff.
- **3.3.5** Develop a program calendar in light of the need to prevent staff burnout.
- **3.3.6** Identify workable practices to implement Conscious Discipline under difficult circumstances (understaffed classrooms, inadequately experienced staff, number of children with behavior issues in class).
- **3.3.7** Explore technology to support staff safety, and infuse technology into infrastructure.

3.3. Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

Strategic Focus Area 4

Effective Communication

GOAL

Child Start communicates effectively with all internal and external stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES

- Child Start is fully-integrated and well-known in the community.
- Child Start employees and teams align with each other through collaboration and communication.
- Child Start employees and teams have avenues for providing feedback and input into Child Start's decision-making process.

DASHBOARD MEASURES

- Increase locations for advertising (radio, billboards, etc.)
- Increase new community business contacts
- Increase community partnerships; increase staff involvement in community activities/committees
- Increase "in-kind" and cash donors
- Improved staff perception of internal communication
- Staff can briefly describe Child Start purpose and services

STRATEGIES, ACTION STEPS, AND CHAMPIONS

4.1 Create an internal communications plan.
[Timeline: October 2020 – August 2022]

- **4.1.1** Identify current internal communication channels at Child Start.
- **4.1.2** Identify barriers to safe communication in current channels.
- **4.1.3** Gather feedback from staff on preferred communication methods.
- **4.1.4** Develop a safe process for employees to raise concerns. Ensure anonymity, ability to circumvent chain of command, no risk of retribution, availability, accessibility, and responsiveness.
- **4.1.5** Identify and implement new methods for providing feedback internally. Ensure that this process is responsive, timely, multi-directional, encouraged, transparent, and inclusive of all levels of staff. Share/train staff on new methods.
- **4.1.6** Redesign the way committees meet (include technology, cross-team collaboration, etc.).

4.1 Champions: Staff person with passion for the issue

4.2 Create an external communications plan.
[Timeline: August 2022 – January 2023]

- **4.2.1** Identify where communications are already occurring—which areas and populations are familiar with Child Start.
- **4.2.2** Identify target populations for outreach and promotion (examples: schools, partners, etc.).
- **4.2.3** Update resource guide for contact information to include Child Start's entire service delivery area.
- **4.2.4** Construct a clear and consistent message. Develop a "one sheet" overview of services that include all programs Child Start operates.
- **4.2.5** Develop a strategy for mitigating negative impact on Child Start's reputation (i.e. disaster communications plan).

4.2 Champions: Communications/ Events Director

Moving Forward

The plan aligns with Child Start's mission to provide early childhood development services that prepare children for lifelong success. This strategic planning effort was informed by Child Start's staff, board members, donors, and community partners.

A first and crucial step to ensuring a strategic plan's effectiveness is clearly communicating the roles of stakeholders. When they understand their roles, stakeholders actively work together to implement strategies, learn from their efforts, adapt, and continue until the desired outcomes are accomplished. Champions will be identified for each focus area strategy. These champions will not necessarily be the ones doing the work associated with their named strategy; instead, they will *facilitate* the work. Dashboard measures will be used to track changes in productivity, effectiveness, and/or efficiency. Over time, Child Start will be able to see progress toward objectives in each focus area, leading the organization to achieve their overall desired end-results.

This strategic plan will be a living document. New circumstances will inform, and perhaps change, the course of the plan. Adaptability ensures that the organization stay attuned to the needs of its stakeholders—those they serve, employees, and volunteers. These recommended steps will help to ensure that Child Start makes progress toward their stated goals and objectives:

- The Child Start board, serving in its governance capacity, should review, revise as needed, and approve the plans.

- Ongoing strategic 'thinking and doing' is required if any progress is to be made toward goals and objects. WSU will provide (separately) a 90-120 Day Strategic Thinking and Doing Worksheet. This tool can guide the work of 'champions' as they implement strategies, monitor progress, and adapt strategies based on what is learned.

A design team, composed of board leadership and members from the Wichita State University Community Engagement Institute, facilitated this planning process.

Timeline

Focus Area 1: Organizational Infrastructure

- Strategy 1.1: Create emergency- and long-term succession plans.
- Strategy 1.2: Research and analyze barriers and opportunities for staff recruitment and retention.
- Strategy 1.3: Create a staff development and training plan.

Focus Area 2: Programming

- Strategy 2.1: Develop and expand current Child Start services.
- Strategy 2.2: Increase parent engagement.
- Strategy 2.3: Develop a process to engage staff in curriculum selection.

Focus Area 3: Internal Alignment and Cohesion

- Strategy 3.1: Develop events, tools, and interventions to collaborate among all Child Start Employees.
- Strategy 3.2: Create common policy practices across Child Start to reflect Child Start's desired culture.
- Strategy 3.3: Identify staff safety concerns and implement protective policies (teachers and home visitors).

Focus Area 4: Effective Communication

- Strategy 4.1: Create an internal communications plan.
- Strategy 4.2: Create an external communications plan.





Child Start

1002 S Oliver
Wichita, KS
67218

316-682-1853